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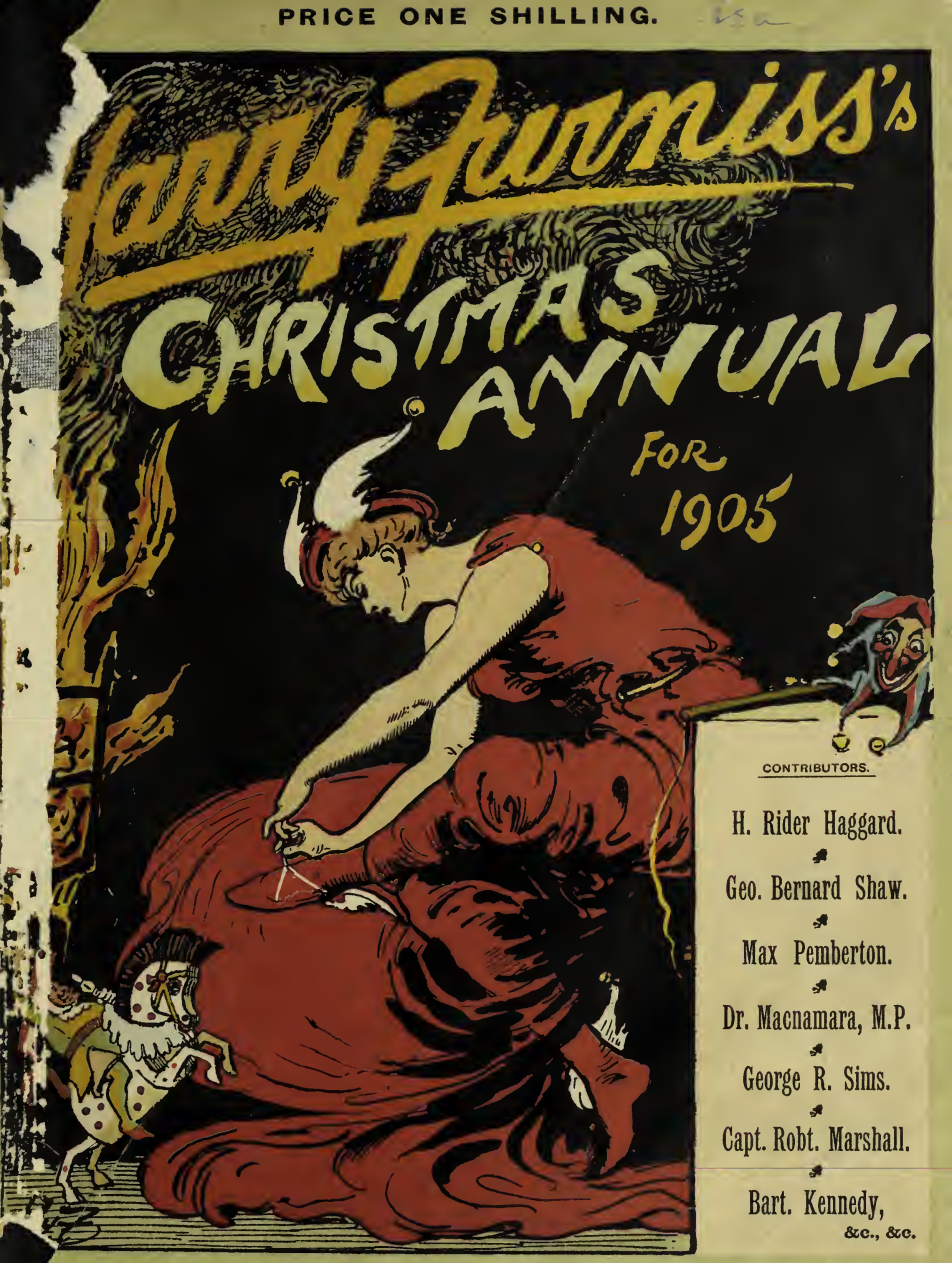
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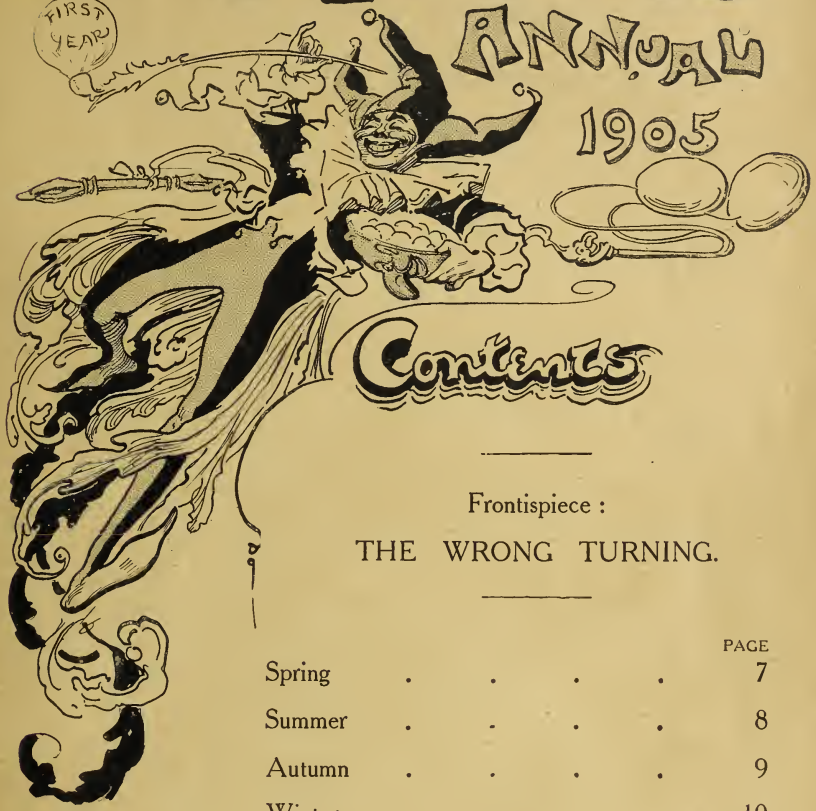
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Contents

Frontispiece :

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PAGE

Spring 7

Summer 8

Autumn 9

Winter 10

Passion, Poison, and Petrifaction ; or, the Fatal Gazogene.
A Tragedy 11

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PAGE

By the Sea 25
By Dr. T. J. MACNAMARA, M.P.

A Ticket for Soup 33
By E. J. MILLIKEN.

The Suites of Success 37
By GEORGE R. SIMS.

Johnny in Thunderland 39
By CAPTAIN ROBERT MARSHALL.

Flowers of the Ballet 53
By G. E. FARROW.

My Dear Sir. The Story of a Batsman and a Boy . 55
By DOMINIQUE MONRO.

Our Daughters—Still Growing? 62

A Wedding Gift 63
By H. RIDER HAGGARD.

Motorphobia 70
By MAX PEMBERTON.

On a Dutch Ship 73
By BART KENNEDY.

The No Hat Movement 78

'Ware Wire! 79

Portrait Puzzle Competition 81

The Land of the Wonderful Co. A Tale for Children . 87
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A Tragedy.

By GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.

IN a bed-sitting room in a fashionable quarter of London a lady sits at her dressing-table, with her maid combing her hair. It is late; and the electric lamps are glowing. Apparently the room is bedless; but there stands against the opposite wall to that at which the dressing-table is placed a piece of furniture that suggests a bookcase without carrying conviction. On the same side is a chest of drawers of that disastrous kind which, recalcitrant to the opener until he is provoked to violence, then suddenly come wholly out and defy all his efforts to fit them in again. Opposite this chest of drawers, on the lady's side of the room, is a cupboard. The presence of a row of gentleman's boots beside the chest of drawers proclaims that the lady is married. Her own boots are beside the cupboard. The third wall is pierced midway by the door, above which is a cuckoo clock. Near the door a pedestal bears a portrait bust of the lady in plaster. There is a fan on the dressing-table, a hatbox and rug strap on the chest of drawers, an umbrella and a bootjack against the wall near the bed. The general impression is one of brightness, beauty, and social ambition, damped by somewhat inadequate means. A certain air of theatricality is produced by the fact that though the room is rectangular it has only three walls. Not a sound is heard except the overture and the crackling of the lady's hair as the maid's brush draws electric sparks from it in the dry air of the London midsummer.



DESIGN FOR THE POSTER.

The cuckoo clock strikes sixteen.

THE LADY: How much did the clock strike, Phyllis?

PHYLLIS: Sixteen, my lady.

THE LADY: That means eleven o'clock, does it not?

PHYLLIS: Eleven at night, my lady. In the morning it means half-past two; so if you hear it strike sixteen during your slumbers, do not rise.

PHYLLIS: Will your ladyship not undress?

THE LADY: Not to-night, Phyllis. [*Glancing through where the fourth wall is missing*] Not under the circumstances.

PHYLLIS [*impulsively throwing herself on her knees by her mistress's side, and clasping her round the waist*]: Oh, my beloved mistress, I know not why or how, but I feel that I shall never see you



"There is murder in the air."

THE LADY: I will not, Phyllis. Phyllis: I am weary. I will go to bed. Prepare my couch.

[Phyllis *crosses the room to the bookcase and touches a button. The front of the bookcase falls out with a crash and becomes a bed. A roll of distant thunder echoes the crash*].

PHYLLIS [*shuddering*]: It is a terrible night. Heaven help all poor mariners at sea! My master is late. I trust nothing has happened to him. Your bed is ready, my lady.

THE LADY: Thank you, Phyllis. [*She rises and approaches the bed*]. Good night.

alive again! There is murder in the air. [*Thunder*]. Hark!

THE LADY: Strange! As I sat there methought I heard angels singing, "Oh, wont you come home, Bill Bailey?" Why should angels call me Bill Bailey? My name is Magnesia Fitztollemache.

PHYLLIS: *Lady* Magnesia Fitztollemache.

LADY MAGNESIA: In case we should never again meet in this world, let us take a last farewell.

PHYLLIS [*embracing her with tears*]: My poor murdered angel mistress!

LADY MAGNESIA: In case we

should meet again, call me at half-past eleven.

PHYLLIS: I will, I will.

[Phyllis *withdraws, overcome by emotion.* Lady Magnesia *switches off the electric light, and immediately hears the angels quite distinctly. They sing "Bill Bailey" so sweetly that she can attend to nothing else, and forgets to remove even her boots as she draws the coverlet over herself and sinks to sleep, lulled by celestial harmony. A white radiance plays on her pillow, and lights up her beautiful face. But the thunder growls again, and a lurid red glow concentrates itself on the door, which is presently flung open, revealing a saturnine figure in evening dress, partially concealed by a crimson cloak. As he steals towards the bed the unnatural glare in his eyes and the broad-bladed dagger nervously gripped in his right hand bode ill for the sleeping lady. Providentially she sneezes on the very brink of eternity; and the tension of the murderer's nerves is such that he bolts precipitately under the bed at the sudden and startling Atscha! A dull, heavy, rhythmic thumping—the beating of his heart—betrays his whereabouts. Soon he emerges cautiously and raises his head above the bed coverlet level.*

THE MURDERER: I can no longer cower here listening to the agonized thumpings of my own heart. She but snoze in her sleep. I'll do't. [*He again raises the dagger. The angels sing again. He cowers*]. What is this? Has that tune reached heaven?

LADY MAGNESIA [*waking and sitting up*]: My husband! [*All the colors of the rainbow chase one another up his face with ghastly brilliancy*]: Why do you change color? And what on earth are you doing with that dagger?

FITZ [*Affecting unconcern, but unhinged*]: It is a present for you: a present from mother. Pretty, isnt it? [*He displays it fatuously*].

LADY MAGNESIA: But she promised me a fish slice.

FITZ: This is a combination fish slice and dagger. One day you have salmon



"I'll do it!

for dinner. The next you have a murder to commit. See?

LADY MAGNESIA: My sweet mother-in-law! [*Someone knocks at the door*]. That is Adolphus's knock. [Fitz's *face turns a dazzling green*]. What has happened to your complexion? You have turned green. Now I think of it, you always do when Adolphus is mentioned. Arnt you going to let him in?

FITZ: Certainly not. [*He goes to the door*]. Adolphus, you cannot enter. My wife is undressed and in bed.

LADY MAGNESIA [*rising*]: I am not. Come in, Adolphus. [*She switches on the electric light*].

ADOLPHUS [*without*]: Something most important has happened. I must come in for a moment.

FITZ [*calling to* Adolphus]: Something important happened? What is it?

ADOLPHUS [*without*]: My new clothes have come home.

FITZ: He says his new clothes have come home.

LADY MAGNESIA [*running to the door and opening it*]: Oh, come in, come in. Let me see.

[Adolphus Bastable *enters. He is in evening dress, made in the latest fashion, with the right half of the coat and the left half of the trousers yellow and the other halves black. His silver-spangled waistcoat has a crimson handkerchief stuck between it and his shirt front*].

ADOLPHUS: What do you think of it?

LADY MAGNESIA: It is a dream! a creation! [*She turns him about to admire him*].

ADOLPHUS [*proudly*]: I shall never be mistaken for a waiter again.

FITZ: A drink, Adolphus?

ADOLPHUS: Thanks.

[Fitztollemache *goes to the cupboard and takes out a tray with tumblers and a bottle of whisky. He puts them on the dressing-table.*

FITZ: Is the gazogene full?

LADY MAGNESIA: Yes; you put in the powders yourself to-day.

FITZ [*sardonically*]: So I did. The special powders! Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! [*His face is again strangely variegated*].

LADY MAGNESIA: Your complexion is really going to pieces. Why do you laugh in that silly way at nothing?

FITZ: Nothing! Ha, ha! Nothing! Ha, ha, ha!

ADOLPHUS: I hope, Mr. Fitztollemache, you are not laughing at my clothes. I warn you that I am an Englishman. You may laugh at my manners, at my brains, at my national institutions; but if you laugh at my clothes, one of us must die. [*Thunder*].

FITZ: I laughed but at the irony of Fate. [*He takes a gazogene from the cupboard*].

ADOLPHUS [*satisfied*]: Oh, *that*! Oh, yes, of course!

FITZ: Let us drown all unkindness in a loving cup. [*He puts the gazogene on the floor in the middle of the room*]. Pardon the absence of a table. We found it in the way, and pawned it. [*He takes the whisky bottle from the dressing-table*].

LADY MAGNESIA: We picnic at home now. It is delightful. [*She takes tumblers from the dressing-table and sits on the floor, presiding over the gazogene, with* Fitz *and* Adolphus *squatting on her left and right respectively.* Fitz *pours whisky into the tumblers*].

FITZ [*as* Magnesia *is about to squirt soda into his tumbler*]: Stay! No soda for me. Let Adolphus have it all—*all*. I will take mine neat.

LADY MAGNESIA [*proffering tumbler to* Adolphus]: Pledge me, Adolphus.



"To Magnesia!"

FITZ: Kiss the cup, Magnesia. Pledge her, man. Drink deep.

ADOLPHUS: To Magnesia!

FITZ: To Magnesia! [*They drink*]. It is done. [Fitz *springs to his feet*]. Adolphus: you have but ten minutes to live—if so long.

ADOLPHUS [*scrambling up*]: What mean you?

MAGNESIA [*rising*]: My mind misgives me. I have a strange feeling here [*touching her heart*].

ADOLPHUS: No, here [*touching his stomach*]. That gazogene is disagreeing with me.

FITZ: It was poisoned! [*Sensation*].

ADOLPHUS: Help! Police!

FITZ: Dastard! you would appeal to the law! Can you not die like a gentleman?

ADOLPHUS: But so young! when I have only worn my new clothes once.

MAGNESIA: It is too horrible. [*To* Fitz]: Fiend! what drove you to this wicked deed?

FITZ: Jealousy. You admired his clothes: you did not admire mine.

ADOLPHUS: My clothes! [*His face lights up with heavenly radiance*]. Have I indeed been found worthy to be the first clothes-martyr. Welcome, death! Hark! angels call me. [*The celestial choir again raises its favorite chant.* Adolphus *listens with a rapt expression. Suddenly the angels sing out of tune; and the radiance on the poisoned man's face turns a sickly green*]. Yah-ah! Oh-oh! The gazogene is disagreeing extremely. Oh! [*He throws himself on the bed, writhing*].

MAGNESIA [*To* Fitz]: Monster, what have you done? [*She points to the distorted figure on the bed*]. That was once a Man, beautiful and glorious. What have you made of it? A writhing, agonized, miserable, moribund worm.

ADOLPHUS [*in a tone of the strongest remonstrance*]: Oh, I say! Oh, come! No, look here, Magnesia! Really!

MAGNESIA: Oh, is this a time for petty vanity? Think of your misspent life——

ADOLPHUS [*much injured*]: *Whose* misspent life?

MAGNESIA [*continuing relentlessly*]: Look into your conscience: look into your stomach. [Adolphus *collapses in hideous spasms. She turns to* Fitz]: And this is *your* handiwork!

FITZ: Mine is a passionate nature, Magnesia. I must have your undivided

love. I must have your love—do you hear?—LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE! [*He raves, accompanied by a fresh paroxysm from the victim on the bed*].

MAGNESIA [*with sudden resolution*]: You *shall* have it.

FITZ [*enraptured*]: Magnesia! I have recovered your love! Oh, how slight appears the sacrifice of this man compared to so glorious a reward! I would poison ten men without a thought of self to gain one smile from you.

ADOLPHUS [*in a broken voice*]: Farewell, Magnesia: my last hour is at hand. Farewell, farewell, farewell!

MAGNESIA: At this supreme moment, George Fitztollemache, I solemnly dedicate to you all that I formerly dedicated to poor Adolphus.

ADOLPHUS: Oh, please not poor Adolphus yet. I still live, you know.

MAGNESIA: The vital spark but flashes before it vanishes. [Adolphus *groans*]. And now, Adolphus, take this last comfort from the unhappy Magnesia Fitztollemache. As I have dedicated to George all that I gave to you, so I will bury in your grave—or in your urn if you are cremated—all that I gave to him.

FITZ: I hardly follow this.

MAGNESIA: I will explain. George: hitherto I have given Adolphus all the romance of my nature—all my love—all my dreams—all my caresses. Henceforth they are yours.

FITZ: Angel!

MAGNESIA: Adolphus, forgive me if this pains you.

ADOLPHUS: Don't mention it. I hardly feel it: the gazogene is so much worse. [*Taken bad again*]. Oh!

MAGNESIA: Peace, poor sufferer: there is still some balm. You are about to hear what I am going to dedicate to *you*.

ADOLPHUS: All I ask is a peppermint lozenge, for mercy's sake.

MAGNESIA: I have something far better than any lozenge: the devotion of a lifetime. Formerly it was George's. I kept his house, or rather, his lodgings. I mended his clothes. I darned his socks. I bought his food. I interviewed his creditors. I stood between him and the servants. I administered his domestic finances. When his hair needed cutting or his countenance was imperfectly washed, I pointed it out to him. The trouble that all this gave me made him prosaic in my eyes. Familiarity bred contempt. Now all that shall end. My husband shall be my hero, my lover, my perfect knight. He shall shield me from all care and trouble. He shall ask nothing in return but love—boundless, priceless rapturous, soul-enthralling love, LOVE, LOVE, LOVE. [*She raves and flings her arms about* Fitz]. And the duties I formerly discharged shall be replaced by the one supreme duty of duties—the duty of weeping at Adolphus's tomb.

FITZ [*reflectively*]: My ownest, this sacrifice makes me feel that I have perhaps been a little selfish. I cannot help feeling that there is much to be said for the old arrangement. Why should Adolphus die for my sake?

ADOLPHUS: I am not dying for your sake, Fitz. I am dying because you poisoned me.

MAGNESIA: You do not fear to die, Adolphus, do you?

ADOLPHUS: N-n-no, I dont exactly *fear* to die. Still——

FITZ: Still, if an antidote——

ADOLPHUS [*bounding from the bed*]: Antidote!

MAGNESIA [*with wild hope*]: Antidote!

FITZ: If an antidote would not be too much of an anti-climax——

ADOLPHUS: Anti-climax be blowed! Do you think I am going to die to please the critics? Out with your antidote, quick!

FITZ: The best antidote to the poison I have given you is lime, plenty of lime.

ADOLPHUS: Lime! You mock me! Do you think I carry lime about in my pockets?

FITZ: There is the plaster ceiling——

MAGNESIA: Yes, the ceiling—saved, saved, saved!

MAGNESIA: Do not stop. You will die. [*She tries to stuff him again*].

ADOLPHUS [*resolutely*]: I prefer death.

MAGNESIA } [*throwing themselves on*
FITZ } *their knees on either side of him*]: For our sakes, Adolphus, persevere.



"Yes, the ceiling—saved, saved, saved!"

[*All three frantically shy boots at the ceiling. Flakes of plaster rain down which* Adolphus *devours, at first ravenously, then with a marked falling off in relish.*

MAGNESIA [*picking up a huge slice*]: Take this, Adolphus: it is the largest. [*She crams it into his mouth*].

FITZ: Ha! a lump off the cornice! Try this.

ADOLPHUS [*desperately*]: Stop! Stop!

ADOLPHUS: No; unless you can supply me with lime in a liquid form, I must perish. Finish that ceiling I cannot and will not.

MAGNESIA: I have a thought—an inspiration! My bust! [*She snatches it from its pedestal and brings it to him*].

ADOLPHUS [*gazing fondly at it*]: Can I resist it?

FITZ: Try the bun.

ADOLPHUS [*gnawing the knot of hair at the back of the bust's head: it*

makes him ill]: Yah, I cannot! I cannot! Not even *your* bust, Magnesia. Do not ask me. Let me die.

FITZ [*pressing the bust on him*]: Force yourself to take a mouthful. Down with it, Adolphus!

ADOLPHUS: Useless. It would not stay down. Water! Some fluid! Ring for something to drink. [*He chokes*].

MAGNESIA: I will save you. [*She rushes to the bell and rings*].

[Phyllis, *in her night-gown, with her hair prettily made up into a chevaux de frise of crocuses with pink and yellow curl papers, rushes in straight to Magnesia*]

PHYLLIS [*hysterically*]: My beloved mistress, once more we meet. [*She sees* Fitztollèmache, *and screams*]. Ah!—ah! —ah! A Man! [*She sees* Adolphus]. Men! [*She flies; but* Fitztollemache *seizes her by the night-gown just as she is escaping*]. Unhand me, villain!

FITZ: This is no time for prudery, girl. Mr. Bastable is dying.



"At first ravenously, then with a marked falling off in relish."

PHYLLIS [*with concern*]: Indeed, sir? I hope he will not think it unfeeling of me to appear at his deathbed in curl papers.

MAGNESIA: We know you have a good heart, Phyllis. Take this [*giving her the bust*]; dissolve it in a jug of hot water; and bring it back instantly. Mr. Bastable's life depends on your haste.

PHYLLIS [*hesitating*]: It do seem a

pity, dont it, maam, to spoil your lovely bust?

ADOLPHUS: Tush! This craze for fine art is beyond all bounds. Off with you. [*He pushes her out*]. Drink, drink, drink! My entrails are parched. Drink! [*He rushes deliriously to the gazogene*].

FITZ [*rushing after him*]: Madman, you forget! It is poisoned!

ADOLPHUS: I dont care. Drink, drink! [*They wrestle madly for the gazogene. In the struggle they squirt all its contents away, mostly into one another's face.* Adolphus *at last flings* Fitztollemache *to the floor, and puts the spout into his mouth*]. Empty! empty! [*With a shriek of despair he collapses on the bed, clasping the gazogene like a baby, and weeping over it*].

FITZ [*aside to* MAGNESIA]: Magnesia, I have always pretended not to notice it; but you keep a siphon for your private use in my hat-box.

MAGNESIA: I use it for washing old lace; but no matter: he shall have it. [*She produces a siphon from the hat-box and offers a tumbler of soda-water to* Adolphus].

ADOLPHUS: Thanks, thanks, oh, thanks! [*He drinks. A terrific fizzing is heard. He starts up screaming*]. Help! help! The ceiling is effervescing! I am BURSTING! [*He wallows convulsively on the bed*].

FITZ: Quick, the rug strap! [*They pack him with blankets and strap him*]. Is that tight enough?

MAGNESIA [*anxiously*]: Will you hold, do you think?

ADOLPHUS: The peril is past. The soda-water has gone flat.

MAGNESIA / FITZ: Thank heaven!

[Phyllis *returns with a washstand ewer, in which she has dissolved the bust*].

MAGNESIA [*snatching it*]: At last!

FITZ: You are saved! Drain it to the dregs.

[Fitztollemache *holds the lip of the ewer to* Adolphus's *mouth and gradually raises it until it stands upside down.* Adolphus's *efforts to swallow it are fearful,* Phyllis *thumping his back when he chokes, and* Magnesia *loosening the straps when he moans. At last, with a sigh of relief, he sinks back in the women's arms.* Fitz *shakes the empty ewer upside down like a postman shaking the froth out of a flagon*].

ADOLPHUS: How inexpressibly soothing to the chest! A delicious numbness steals through all my members. I would sleep.

MAGNESIA / FITZ / PHYLLIS: [*whispering*]: Let him sleep.

[*He sleeps. Celestial harps are heard; but their chords cease on the abrupt entrance of the* Landlord, *a vulgar person in pyjamas.*

THE LANDLORD: Eah! Eah! Wots this? Wots all this noise? Ah kin ennybody sleep through it? [*Looking at the floor and ceiling*]. Ellow! wot you bin a doin te maw ceilin?

FITZ: Silence, or leave the room! If you wake that man he dies!

THE LANDLORD: If e kin sleep through the noise you three mikes e kin sleep through ennythink.

MAGNESIA: Detestable vulgarian: your pronunciation jars on the finest chords in my nature. Begone!

THE LANDLORD [*looking at* Adolphus]: Aw downt blieve eze esleep Aw blieve eze dead. [*Calling*]. Pleece! Pleece! Merder! [*A blue halo plays mysteriously on the door, which opens and reveals a* Policeman. *Thun-*



"Magnesia flings herself on the stony breast of Adolphus."

der]. Eah, pleecmin: these three's bin an merdered this gent between em, an naw tore moy ahse dahn.

THE POLICEMAN [*offended*]: Policeman, indeed! Where's your manners?

FITZ: Officer——

THE POLICEMAN [*with distinguished consideration*]: Sir?

FITZ: As between gentlemen——

THE POLICEMAN [*bowing*]: Sir: to you.

FITZ [*bowing*]:—I may inform you that my friend had an acute attack of indigestion. No carbonate of soda being available, he swallowed a portion of this man's ceiling. [*Pointing to* Adolphus]: Behold the result!

THE POLICEMAN: The ceiling was poisoned! Well, of all the artful—— [*He collars the* Landlord]. I arrest you for wilful murder.

THE LANDLORD [*appealing to the heavens*]: Ow, is this jestice! Ah could aw tell e wiz gowin te eat moy ceilin?

THE POLICEMAN [*releasing him*]: True. The case is more complicated than I thought. [*He tries to lift* Adolphus's *arm, but cannot*]. Stiff already.

THE LANDLORD [*trying to lift* Adolphus's *leg*]: An precious evvy. [*Feeling the calf*]. Woy, eze gorn ez awd ez niles.

FITZ [*rushing to the bed*]: What is this?

MAGNESIA: Oh, say not he is dead.

Phyllis, fetch a doctor. [Phyllis *runs out. They all try to lift* Adolphus; *but he is perfectly stiff, and as heavy as lead*]. Rouse him. Shake him.

THE POLICEMAN [*exhausted*]: Whew! Is he a man or a statue? [Magnesia *utters a piercing scream*]. What's wrong, miss?

MAGNESIA [*To* Fitz]: Do you not see what has happened?

FITZ [*striking his forehead*]: Horror on horror's head!

THE LANDLORD: Wotjemean?

MAGNESIA: The plaster has set inside him. The officer was right: he is indeed a living statue.

[Magnesia *flings herself on the stony breast of* Adolphus. Fitztollemache *buries his head in his hands; and his chest heaves convulsively. The* Policeman *takes a small volume from his pocket and consults it*].

THE POLICEMAN: This case is not provided for in my book of instructions. It dont seem no use trying artificial respiration, do it? [*To the* Landlord]: Here! lend a hand, you. We'd best take him and set him up in Trafalgar Square.

THE LANDLORD: Aushd put im in the cestern an worsh it aht of im.

[Phyllis *comes back with a* Doctor].

PHYLLIS: The medical man, my lady.

THE POLICEMAN: A poison case, sir.

THE DOCTOR: Do you mean to say that an unqualified person! a layman! has dared to administer poison in my district?

THE POLICEMAN: [*raising* Magnesia *tenderly*]: It looks like it. Hold up, my lady.

THE DOCTOR: Not a moment must be lost. The patient must be kept awake at all costs. Constant and violent motion is necessary. [*He snatches* Magnesia *from the* Policeman, *and rushes her about the room*].

FITZ: Stop! That is not the poisoned person!

THE DOCTOR: It is you, then. Why did you not say so before? [*He seizes* Fitztollemache, *and rushes him about*].

THE LANDLORD: Naow, naow: thet ynt im.

THE DOCTOR: What, you! [*He pounces on the* Landlord *and rushes him round*].

THE LANDLORD: Eah! chack it. [*He trips the* Doctor *up. Both fall*]. Jest owld this loonatic, will you, Mister Horficer?

THE POLICEMAN [*dragging both of them to their feet*]: Come out of it, will you. You must all come with me to the station. [*Thunder*].

MAGNESIA: What! In this frightful storm! [*The rain patters dismally on the window*].

PHYLLIS: It's raining. [*The wind howls*].

THE LANDLORD: It's thanderin en lawtnin.

FITZ: It's dangerous.

THE POLICEMAN [*drawing his baton and whistle*]: If you wont come quietly, then---- [*He whistles. A fearful flash is followed by an appalling explosion of heaven's artillery. A thunderbolt enters the room, and strikes the helmet of the devoted* Constable, *whence it is attracted to the waistcoat of the* Doctor *by the lancet in his pocket. Finally it leaps with fearful force on the* Landlord, *who, being of a gross and spongy nature, absorbs the electric fluid at the cost of his life. The others look on horror-stricken as the three victims, after reeling, jostling, cannoning through a ghastly quadrille, at last sink inanimate on the carpet*].

MAGNESIA [*listening at the* Doctor's *chest*]: Dead!

FITZ [*kneeling by the* Landlord, *and raising his hand, which drops with a thud*]: Dead!

PHYLLIS [*seizing the looking-glass and holding it to the* Policeman's *lips*]: Dead!

FITZ [*solemnly rising*]: The copper attracted the lightning.

MAGNESIA [*rising*]: After life's fitful fever they sleep well. Phyllis, sweep them up.

[Phyllis *replaces the looking-glass on the dressing-table; takes up the fan; and fans the* Policeman, *who rolls away like a leaf before the wind to the wall. She disposes similarly of the* Landlord *and* Doctor.

PHYLLIS: Will they be in your way if I leave them there until morning, my lady? Or shall I bring up the ashpan and take them away?

MAGNESIA: They will not disturb us. Good-night, Phyllis.

PHYLLIS: Good-night, my lady. Good-night, sir. [*She retires*].

MAGNESIA: And now, husband, let us perform our last sad duty to our friend. He has become his own monument. Let us erect him. He is heavy; but love can do much.

FITZ: A little leverage will get him on his feet. Give me my umbrella.

MAGNESIA: True. [*She hands him the umbrella, and takes up the bootjack.*



The Final Tableau.

They get them under Adolphus's *back, and prize him up on his feet*].

FITZ: Thats done it. Whew!

MAGNESIA [*kneeling on the left hand of the statue*]: For ever and for ever, Adolphus.

FITZ [*kneeling on the right hand of the statue*]: The rest is silence.

[*The* Angels *sing "Bill Bailey." The statue raises its hands in an attitude of blessing, and turns its limelit face to heaven as the curtain falls. National Anthem*].

ATTENDANTS [*in front*]: All out for the next performance. Pass along ladies and gentlemen: pass along.



This tragedy was written at the request of Mr. Cyril Maude, under whose direction it was performed repeatedly, with colossal success, in a booth in Regent's Park, for the benefit of The Actors' Orphanage, on the 14th of July, 1905, by Miss Irene Vanbrugh, Miss Nancy Price, Mr. G. P. Huntley, Mr. Cyril Maude, Mr. Eric Lewis, Mr. Arthur Williams, and Mr. Lennox Pawle.

As it is extremely difficult to find an actor capable of eating a real ceiling, it will be found convenient in performance to substitute the tops of old wedding cakes for bits of plaster. There is but little difference in material between the two substances; but the taste of the wedding cake is considered more agreeable by many people.

The orchestra should consist of at least a harp, a drum, and a pair of cymbals, these instruments being the most useful in enhancing the stage effect.

The landlord may with equal propriety be a landlady, if that arrangement be better suited to the resources of the company.

G. B. S.

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MY friend Alf has left for his fortnight's holiday by the sea. He is stopping at a "Boarding Establishment" styled "Mar Lodge"— And they are all dukes at "Mar Lodge"—nothing short of dukes; though, as poor Dan Leno used to say, there is occasionally a dash of viscounts. According to the visitors' book most of them prefer to travel, as they would say, "incog.," and to sign themselves plain "Mr." But one, at any rate, is down as Viscount Dulwich in a hand that for beauty of form and running freedom would be a joy for ever in any stock-book. Nevertheless they are all dukes or honourables, and have a brilliant way of inferentially suggesting familiar acquaintance with the great ones of the land.

I confess that for dukes and honourables they are just a *leetle* spick and span. I never study the wealth of swelling pink shirt fronts, the natty woven ties, the "nobby" tweed caps, and the woollen stockings—whose patterns "swear" at you, as the Frenchman says—without expecting one and all to rush on me with

the adjuration "Sign!" There are also several brand new golf bags, bound with newly-minted leather, each containing a gim-grack driver, a brassie, an iron, a mashie, and a putter—each bag and set of clubs fifteen shillings from Ramage's. (You don't, thank God, play with them. They are only for show.)

The proprietor of our boarding establishment was once a butler in a good family. Shrewd man, his deference to his present patrons is a thing beyond description. Still, sometimes I catch a smirk in the tail of his eye as he flits softly to and fro at the dinner table. He "rooks us"—as one of the honourables aptly puts it—for seven and sixpence a day. So we dine at six—twenty-five of us down each side of a forty-foot table, and two at each end of the four-foot-six width. We sit "contagious," as the Irish Jarvey puts it; breathe by mutual consent, and eat a salmon mayonnaise—providentially in very small helpings.

Each of us is flanked by half-a-dozen varieties and shades of wineglasses, and four-fifths of the stupid little area of the table-top is taken up with gorgeous *epergnes* — on substantial plate-glass mirrors—from which trail reckless nasturtiums with an occasional geranium.

Then, as there is no end of room to spare, we fill in the bare places with ecclesiastical-looking mineral-water holders and, by way of menu, we enjoy by threes the privilege of a china-ware easel arrangement on which to rest the prospectus—written in the jerky, angular female hand of the early sixties—of the great meal's courses. Dominating all is, in strident and heavy type, the advertisement of an Aerated Water.

Mostly we find room for another bottle which distinctly mars the beauty of the table. It is a heavy black flagon of a new claret from Queensland or a fancy port from South America. Its neck is hung with a big luggage label on which in a cobbler's hand is written the plain "Mr. So-and-so," which hides so much nobility of extraction and social distinction. On Sunday, for the sake of the servants, I gather, we dine at mid-day. So they hand round tea in the drawing-room at four.



"Lord Mortlake."

The drawing-room is a dream of old-gold sashes. Also some better class canvas chairs and a much-patronised central settee. The "visitor" who can carry a cup of tea from one side of the room to the other without spilling the tea or a chair or both, could probably learn some neat Cinquevalli tricks in a very short time.

And the tea. There is nothing délicate about our dukes—or their ladies, for

that matter. Plates of a black-looking cake, called, I fancy, "Sultana," and of substantial bread and butter come and go like an East Coast express.

Still there is a distinct touch of romance about it all. Each of my ducal bounders has "spotted" the girl he means to "mash" during his holiday and it is she who is giggling at the highly obvious similes he is drawing from the cream and sugar to which she is at present helping him.

I like these girls. (Artemus and I have many traits in common). Strangely enough they are not anything like so pretentious as the men. And, for the matter of that, not a thousandth part so vain. These young ladies are from "'Arding and 'Iggingses," Brixton. You could not fail to know that they were young ladies "in business" from the persistent way they "dear" each other. Never mind. They look very pretty and attractive, albeit some Eastern necromancer has apparently conjured up for them new and alarming methods of arranging the hair.

By-and-by she of the sugar and cream will run upstairs and don a bewitching little jacket over her diaphanous blouse. With the red of the sun under her merry eyes heightening the white of her regular little rows of teeth, a wilful curl breaking away from the straight heavy mass of hair brought down over the ear, and a rakish hat of brown chip straw and red poppies to crown all, "Lord Mortlake's" is the only attribute to apply to her—"fetching!"

And she and "Lord Mortlake" will be off for the evening till the white mists make the little one shiver in spite of the jaunty air of holiday frivolity.

"Miss Ella"—thus is she known—has been spending twopence a day for a week at the Circulating Library on the neurotic novel. At the first blush trouble suggests itself. But it is all right. "Miss Ella" is merely, here as elsewhere, the strict



"A bewitching little jacket over her diaphanous blouse."

creature of convention. She has been carrying her books about with her when the band plays "Hiawatha" on the pier in the morning; but beyond a fugitive glance here and there she is, happily, innocent of their contents.

By-and-by she will marry "Lord Mortlake" or some other boarding establishment admirer, and will add another charm to the Acre Lane, Brixton. Next time I meet them at the seaside they will have moved into "Apartments." Ella will be comfortably banked up in the sand by the shade behind the cliff with one eye on a novelette and the other on a tyrant in holland with a bucket and a spade; and my "Lord Mortlake" will have gone out fishing for "dabs" or to the bar of



MURDERING THE "DEVOUT LOVER."

"The Bear and Three Keys" to get a glimpse at the cricket news.

But that is anticipating. When "Miss Ella" starts for home and "'Arding and 'Iggingses" next Saturday she will knock at "Lord Mortlake's" bedroom in the early morning and cry out, "Good-bye!" to the slumbering Romeo within. And then, with the other girls, she will run downstairs giggling consumedly at her much daring.

Midnight is the hour for retiring at Mar Lodge." But we don't all go then. When the dark has settled over the sea and hands begin to feel clammy, we wander by two and threes into the drawing-room, and then Miss Brown obliges. She plays Edward German's three dances nicely enough on a frightful piano, and will, when alone, get the length of the Suite from Peer Gynt. Miss Brown is a school teacher. I like Miss Brown. Then some brute or other in spats and tweed knickers will murder "The Devout Lover"—and what an affliction that self-same "Devout Lover" can become only those who have been terrified by the normal boarding establishment "Garden of Sleep" can have any conception. Of course for the last few years we have become obtrusively patriotic, and a little man, with those attributes strongly marked that Mulvaney insists betrays the "bad dhrill," is in great demand nightly asking us "Who carries the gun?" He points the query with such a ferocious glare at his audience that I feel inclined to copy the terrified youngster who, when asked by a violent school inspector, "Who made the world?" burst out blubbering and spluttered incontinently, "Please, sir, it wasn't me!"

Then the middle-aged lady—a voluntary spinster, I should say—who has been reading "The Lamplighter" ever since she came, gives us "Robin Adair," by the general request of the company. She is pressed into the service every night, and for the same sweet song. She takes her stand upon the same pattern in the carpet, assumes with an air of utter dejection the same stricken attitude, and sings the song through in precisely the same key, pitched as near as I can make out about one-eighth of a note below the piano.



"Duncan Gray."

This is the event of the evening. She thinks so; I am sure of it.

After her burly Mr. Johnson—who sings "Duncan Gray," uproariously and in a voice like a foghorn going strong, and stamps his foot with an air of complete exasperation every time "Ha! ha! the wooin' o't" comes round—falls very flat indeed.

For dukes we revel rather recklessly in the comic element when the ladies leave at eleven. And we emphasise all the points without the slightest evidence

of aristocratic reserve when Jones avers that he "Could-do, could-do, could-do,could-do, could-do with a bit!"

Downstairs they are smoking terrible cigarettes and making much display upon a miniature billiard table. Somebody or other has to shift his seat or lose an eye every time a stroke is made. But that all adds to the fun, and we crack eternal jokes about the need to "have a bit of the wall out" each time the butt of the little cue comes to a sudden stop in its artistic backward sweep.



"He moves his position only to touch the bell."

Over in a corner, surveying mankind from the fumes of a strong pipe-tobacco, sits the one silent man of the company. He moves his position only to touch the bell to summons Biggs, the proprietor. "Certainly," says Biggs mysteriously, "I will send out for it." The "sending out" process winds up with Biggs ascending from the cellar below, and thereafter the silent man wears an air of philosophic detachment more benevolent than ever.

Upstairs, a smitten victim of amateur photography—the idiot loads himself up day by day with more baggage than a private of the line in heavy marching order—is confined to his room "developing plates." Hour after hour the room is lit only with the red glimmer of a little lantern, and my camera-maniac kneels for hours together with his head beneath the bed-clothes! I don't pretend to understand it all. The other day he took the "Mar Lodge" party in the little back yard. The result was not reassuring. I, for instance, was lying *perdu* in front. So far as I am concerned the "development" devoted itself almost exclusively to my feet, which for ever will clinch one of my wife's dearest arguments.

A storey higher than the photo-fiend a party of three jolly dogs are playing "nap" for dear life, passing coppers with an air of regal disregard, and laying into a bottle of Johnny Walker—also "sent out for," as the figment goes, even though the shops were all shut an hour before it was asked for. Peep in at the door. A hot puff of smoke-laden air almost pushes you backward. But the jolly dogs inside will rollick along until the candles and the whiskey give out.

By-and-by, in the small hours of the morning, quiet will at last fall on "Mar Lodge." And its weary "slaveys," huddled together in the stuffy basement, will snatch a less restless hour of slumber.

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Harry Furniss's Christmas Annual, 1905.

A TICKET FOR SOUP.

A Ticket for Soup;

OR,

THE MODERN "JOLLY BEGGARS."

By the late **E. J. MILLIKEN.** ('Arry, of Punch.)

Never before published.

Could but some Cockney Burns appear
To sing our "Jolly Beggars" here,
In Babylon the dull and drear,
How would his vivid fancy
Depict this dismal, dingy group
Of haggard applicants for soup?
How different from the jovial troop,
Who quaffed with "Poosie-Nansie"!
Not jocund Burns, not genial Gay,
The "Beggar's Opera" of our day
Would yearn to sing.
Mirth from the modern mendicant?
'Twere like a grin from ghoul-faced Want!
Yet cheatery sly, and cant and rant,
Which were in Robbie's time extant,
Are still a-wing!

Wi' quaffing and laughing,
They ranted and they sang;
Wi' jumping and thumping,
The vera girdle rang.

* Poosie Nansie (or Agnes Gibson) kept a sort of cadger's house nearly opposite to the churchyard gate in Mauchline. There Burns, attracted by the mirthful uproar, joined the crew, and made the studies for his wonderful "Jolly Beggars."

The "gangrel bodies" limned by Burns
Doubtless could whine and whoop by turns;
Our beggars patter, whine, and quaff,
But do they *laugh?*
Well, maybe yes, at generous gulls,
Who take foul tramps and frowsy trulls
For "iron fortune's" genuine Poor!
The edge of Charity it dulls
To know the "merry core,"
Lurking at night in loathsome lairs,
Put by their whimpering patter-prayers,
(That pour so pat, reeled off by rote)
And rattle from drink-raucous throat
(In mockery of the "toffish mug"
To whom they owe their shelter snug),
Imposture's coarse guffaw!
'Twould somewhat break the bland content
Of uninstructed Sentiment,
Smoothing complacent jaw
In retrospect of reckless dole;
'Twould somewhat check the indignant roll
Of rhetoric from the soft blind soul
Railing at rigid Law.
Our "Jolly Beggars" laugh—in scorn
Of fools who deem their state forlorn!

But *these!* Jaques Callot's graphic pen
Might limn them. Children? Women? Men?—
Nay, sordid scarecrows, spectres gaunt,
Life's wreckage, outworn slaves of Want!
Wan, mud-soiled, mutely melancholic,
The Ploughman's cadgers held high frolic
By Poosie-Nansie's fire,
And though trickt out in "auld red rags,"
And blanketed "wi' mealy bags,"
Warmth, snugness, mirth, desire
Alert, were theirs; but yon wan creature,
Shawl-huddled, lank-jowl'd, grim of feature!

That slack-lip'd lout, chilled claw in pocket!
Life there seems burned sheer to the socket.
Wake laughter on the writhéd mouth
Of that old man all dirt and drouth;
Make human that bowed scowling churl;
Bring childhood's gaiety to that girl,
Whose want-dwarf'd Soul is one fierce craving!
What hapless fate, what Vice enslaving,
Hath brought this dull horde hither?
Like bitter weeds disrooted, they
From life's trim garden, rich and gay,
They seem flung careless by the way,
To wilt, and waste, and wither.
Some semblance of smug smartness yet,
And jaunty swagger, marks the wet-
Bearded, close-buttoned brute, whose nose,
Air-cocked, some lingering sense of pose
And self-importance still out-shows,
In penury! last degradation.
But all the rest are all too far
Down Want's Avernus-slope to care
For piteous ostentation.
"Penny for Soup!" That is their plea,
In silence urged, or with the free
And fluent shamelessness of age,
Sodden to cadgerdom! last stage
Of crawling, cringing, hound-humility,
Spiritless, drink-debased senility,
That knows no pulse of upward yearning.
It sets the fancy backward turning
To Burns's poor but "jovial thrang,"
Who drank, and drowsed, and wooed, and sang
In Poosie-Nansie's cadger's-house
By Mauchline Churchyard. Cheat and chouse,
Tinkler and trull, foregathered there;
And London too full many a lair
Of merry mendicants may show;
Where in the firelight's cosy glow,
Soul-warmed by something more than soup,
Cadgers and tramps in squalid group

Make mirthful uproar, mad, impure,
And loud lewd laughter, that might lure
A human, humour-studying bard,
Of wit Falstaffian, there to pause
And join the crew, and lead the applause,
Like Burns hard by Mauchline Churchyard.

For Beggars are not always dull,
Or weather-drenched, or drowsy;
They know mad hours when lout and trull,
Though rag-clad, foul, and frowsy,
Share creature-comforts Trade, poor drudge,
Might envy. Shoulder-hunched to trudge
Town-park or country lane, or, fleet,
Along the smart suburban street,
Pursue with prayer and menace blent
The poor scared villa resident.
These make not life's most trying task,
Ask the soul-wearied sempstress, ask
The "phossy-jaw'd" match-maker! Try
With a "soup-ticket" yonder tramp!
Ferocious scowl and mocking eye,
And muttered curse, and savage stamp,
Will be your ill-deserved reply
Dear Lady Bountiful!
His limp, rain-soaked hat brim he'll pull,
That worn old wolf, when hunger-driven;
But many a dole, in kindness given
To him and to his sort, is found
By "Bobby" on his morning round,
Scorn-scattered on the sodden ground,
In wreck-strewn waste or entry dark.
To test the prowler of the park,
Or the suburban cadger-thief,
Offer him, for the sure relief
Of "sheer starvation," his sworn plea,
Not the expected dole or fee
Of coin, that means a welcome "drink,"
But a soup-ticket! See him slink,
Savage away, and you, loud-curst,
Will learn the prowling beggar's first,
Last woe not hunger is—but Thirst!



It was the night after the fire in the property room at the Theatre Royal, Rushem-on-Terms. In the fire a drawing-room "suite," consisting of two chairs and a sofa, had suffered severely. Only one chair had survived the accident, and that was badly damaged.

In the small hours a property knight in armour used for baronial halls, annoyed by the groaning and creaking of the damaged chair, expostulated angrily.

"Don't make that noise! I can't get a wink of sleep. What are you groaning about?"

"I can't help it," said the chair. "For five-and-twenty years my poor comrades, the sofa and the other chair, and I have been associated in making the manager's fortune, and now I am alone in the world —I mean suite."

"Manager's fortune!" exclaimed the knight; "what egotism! As if a worn-out old drawing-room suite had anything to do with successful theatrical management!"

"Friend," replied the chair, "you are a newcomer, and do not grasp the situation."

"Then, for goodness' sake, explain it," said the knight. "Give it off your faded chest and let me go to sleep again."

"Know then," sighed the chair, "that five-and-twenty years ago the proprietor of this theatre, then newly started in

management, bought the suite of which I was an honoured member at a sale for five pounds. We had seen our best days then, but he took four chairs for his house and put two of us and the sofa into his property room. The next week he put us into a 'drawing-room scene' for a travelling manager, and charged him £2 10s. for the hire of us for a week. Since then we have appeared in the drawing-room scene of hundreds of dramas and comedies that have visited the Theatre Royal, Rushem, and our proprietor has always charged £2 10s. for the hire of us for the week."

"And the travelling manager paid it?" exclaimed the knight, astonished.

"He had to," replied the chair. "Deduct the pantomime and plays without drawing-room scenes, and you can reckon we appeared for thirty weeks every year. Thus we earned for our proprietor—who never spent a farthing on us—£75 a year. Multiply £75 by 25, the number of years we have been here, and you have a grand total of £1,875, which our proprietor has earned by the outlay of a five-pound note."

"By my halidom!" exclaimed the knight, "you take my breath away! Our proprietor must be a rich man."

"He is. He has acquired house after house. He now owns twenty provincial theatres. There is a suite for hire in each of them. For some he has paid less than he paid for us."

"Twenty suites at £75 a year each!" roared the knight, his armour rattling with his laughter. "Then he makes £1,500 a year at your calculation out of dilapidated suites of furniture which have not cost him £5 each."

"Quite so. And now, my old companions are gone, and I am so badly burnt I can never appear again. It will be a great loss to our proprietor. It makes me sad to think of it. Let us talk of something else. To what do you attribute the dearth of good attractions in the provincial theatres?"





JOHNNY felt a little tired as he lay down on the cool grass beneath the great beech tree that grew in the garden of his father's quarters. He had been enjoying a holiday given him because he was a really good little boy. Johnny's father was Colonel of a Regiment and Johnny meant to be the same some day.

Meantime he worked at his lessons diligently because his tutor insisted on it. He never told untruths if there was a chance of being found out, and he never got into mischief if anyone were watching him. He was very fond of water and of paddling in it even with his clothes on (which he was forbidden to do), so that after amusing himself all day in a stream he would come home wet and muddy, and with flowing tears would tell his mother how he had fallen into the brook. "For," said Johnny to himself, "water to me is temptation, and I fell into it."

He was never greedy when he was not hungry, and he never stole unripe apples. "For," said he, "to eat an unripe stolen apple would pain me."

Well, as I said, Johnny stretched himself on the cool grass, and I think he would very soon have fallen asleep had not a voice that sounded close to his ear aroused him.

"Rub-a-dub, rub-a-dub!" said the voice.

Johnny looked up and saw a big drum, with a head and arms and legs, watching him. This was so astonishing a sight that he sat up, rubbed his eyes, and stared —rather rudely I'm afraid—at the drum.

"You don't seem to know me," said the latter.

"I think," replied Johnny timidly, "I have seen you at the head of the Regiment."

"Which head?" asked the Drum; "a regiment has a thousand heads."

"What I meant," said Johnny, "was the front of the regiment. I've seen you being beaten, and——"

"You should say what you mean," answered the Drum quite angrily. "As to being beaten, the less said about that the better. I may be beaten when we're marching, but I don't get blown like the bugle anyhow. The big drummer's in hospital, and I'm having a rest. A good few bars rest, too."

Johnny meantime had observed that the newcomer's legs and arms were formed of drum sticks, and that his head resembled a metronome, which, as you know, is an instrument used for beating time.

"Look here," suddenly said the Drum, "I'm going to tea at the Quart Pot's, and you can come if you'll show me the way."

"I'm afraid," replied Johnny, "I don't know the way. Oh, please don't do that," he added hastily, for the Drum was laughing in such a peculiar way that it sounded like a cricket ball rolling about his empty interior.

"You don't know the way to the Quart Pot's?" said the Drum with a rather disagreeable snigger. "Wait till you're a soldier and you'll soon find out. Come on!"

And Johnny went off hand in hand with his new companion.

They had not proceeded very far, however, before they came across a curious-looking individual who wore a red coat, blue trousers, and a white helmet.

"A soldier, I suppose?" said Johnny to the Drum.

"Quite right," was the reply; "that's Mr. Atkins — Mr. Thomas Atkins, I should say."

By this time they were close to the soldier, and Johnny regarded him with interest. He had a peculiar face. It was rather good-looking, with a dash of humour in it, and a suggestion of stupidity and sharpness curiously blended. He looked as if he had, at one time or other, been all sorts of people, good fellow, rogue, fool, wit, and lover.

"I'll leave you with Mr. Atkins," said the Drum to Johnny, "and go on to the Quart Pot's, and if he'll have you to tea I'll come and fetch you."

"Thank you," said Johnny, and the Drum disappeared.

There followed an awkward pause, for Mr. Atkins made no remark, and Johnny didn't like to begin the conversation. At last, however, summoning his courage, he remarked:

"Will you kindly tell me what you are?"

"I'm only 'arf a file," said Atkins, and the following conversation ensued:

"Will you please tell me where I am?"

"Ye're in Thunderland."

"Oh, yes," said Johnny, "and where is that?"

"Here."

"I meant," stammered Johnny, "why is it called Thunderland?"

"'Cos troops live 'ere. And what with guns firin', rifles rattlin', drums beatin', bugles blowin', bands playin', sergeants shoutin', officers lecturin', and permiscuous langwidge, the air is black, 'cept at night."

"Dear me! and are you dissatisfied?" for Mr. Atkins seemed a little gloomy.

"They says I am, so I 'as to be."

"Who says so?"

"I dunno. The papers, for one."

"And what is your grievance?"

"I dunno."

"But you've got one?"

"Yuss. Lots."

There was another pause, after which Johnny remarked politely:

"I like your uniform. You look so clean."

"That's 'cos I'm an orderly. I carry official letters and army forms back'ards and for'ards all day long."

"Where to?"

"Anywhere. Everywhere. They're thickest if there's a General about."

"Indeed," remarked Johnny.

"'Ave ye ever 'eerd me sing?" said Mr. Atkins presently.

"If seven clerks with seven wires
Filed them for half a year,
Do you suppose," the Colonel said,
"That they could get it clear?"
"I doubt it," said the Orderly,
And shed a bitter tear.

"I know not why they come to me
So many in a day,
They mostly are of no account
And only in the way."
The soldier burst in tears and said,
"I cannot say you nay."



"I doubt it," said the Orderly, and shed a bitter tear.

"No," answered Johnny, "but I should like to."

"Right," said the soldier. "Listen."

And without more ado he sang the following song, announcing the title as "Army Forms":

The Colonel and the Orderly
Were walking hand in hand,
Reports and letters lay so thick
You couldn't hear the band.
"If this were only cleared away,"
They said, "It would be grand!"

"And yet I've got to answer them,"
The Colonel said and sighed,
"If only one kind General
To do without them tried"—
But this so shocked the Orderly
He stood at ease and died.

"What a sad ending," remarked Johnny, as Atkins' voice died away in a long-drawn nasal twang.

"Sad!" replied Atkins. "Why sad? 'Ow do you know life ain't standin' at

attention and death standin' easy. Ye carn't tell."

At this moment a sudden blowing of bugles and beating of drums caused them both to look round.

"Allo!" said Atkins, "there's the parade; I must be off." And taking down a belt, bayonet, and rifle, which were hanging on a tree, and which Johnny hadn't noticed before, he proceeded to equip himself and then doubled off.



The General and his Staff

Johnny watched the parade with great interest.

A regiment of infantry, one of cavalry, a battery of field artillery, and a General and his staff occupied the parade ground. The officers were ranged in a semicircle and the General was addressing them. They looked more bored than intelligent, but on the whole clean and tidy.

"I will now," said the General, in a loud, hoarse voice, "read you the general idea of this Field-day."

"May I ask, sir," interrupted a timid-looking Colonel, "are we to understand that a general idea embodies the ideas of a General?"

The General, a stout, red person, in cock feathers and brass fittings, was a little bewildered at this, and immediately beckoned to his staff, who, galloping up at once, and talking vigorously and without any punctuation, soon surrounded him. After a great deal of discussion the General withdrew, and, turning to the timid Colonel, replied as follows:

"I find your question necessitates undue consideration, and as this should never be given the incident is now closed."

"Then I am at liberty to adopt the view I propounded?" asked the Colonel.

"You are at liberty to do as I tell you," roared the General, whereat the infantry regiment came to "Attention" as a mark of respect. After bowing his acknowledgment of this courtesy the General proceeded: "A hostile force is advancing to attack us, and——"

The remainder of the sentence was lost,

for the news had caused a panic, and the cavalry soldiers were hurriedly mounting and galloping home.

"Dear, dear!" cried the General "tell them it's only an *imaginary* foe."

As this comforting news spread the men came back in twos and threes and fell in again, remarking that they had only fallen out to see if their barrack damage accounts were correct, and that it was no occasion for innuendoes on personal valour. They also argued that the General had taken them by surprise, and that as an army should be guarded against surprise, the whole circumstances were extremely regrettable, not to say reprehensible.



"Bless my soul!" cried the General, riding up, "what's the matter now?"

"To continue," proceeded the General, when order had been established, "we are the red force, the enemy the green. A flank attack will be made by a blue force, and the outposts will be yellow."

"That is awkward," murmured an aged Major, falling off his horse, with some emotion.

"Awkward," said the General. "What's awkward?"

"Well, sir," replied the elderly officer, gently but firmly, "if the blue attack gets mixed with the yellow outposts they will become a green enemy."

Here was a problem. For a moment the General was completely staggered. Such a complication had never occurred to him.

"Blue and yellow!" he mused, quite irritably. "Blue and yellow! of course, it's perfectly clear, they do make green. Chief of the Staff, what's to be done? You drew up the plans?"

"Pardon me, sir," replied the officer addressed, "you promulgated the general idea, and are in every sense an ideal General."

"My point," remarked the timid Colonel, with a momentary glare of satisfaction.

"However," said the aged Major wearily, but not ill-naturedly, "I see no

reason why the enemy should not be purple, especially if we infuriate them."

"A capital idea!" cried the General. "Purple be it. That removes the difficulty. Let the enemy be purple. March off."

And off marched the troops.

They had not, however, proceeded far, when an incident occurred which put a new complexion on the contemplated manœuvres.

The big drummer suddenly dropped his drum, and, crashing through it head foremost, lay in what seemed an uncomfortably critical condition.

"Bless my soul!" cried the General, riding up, "what's the matter now?"

On this the big drummer raised his head, then slowly and painfully, as though the very words were dragged from him, and carefully avoiding the General's eye, said solemnly, but with a north country accent, "Blue and red makes purple, sir."

Then he lay quite still.

As for the General, this new aspect of affairs had seemingly paralysed him, and he wandered about helplessly.

"Where is my staff?" at last he roared, and some five or six jaded-looking officers advanced and saluted him with melancholy nonchalance.

"I ask you, gentlemen," thundered the General, "is a staff meant to be relied on or not?"

"We rely on you," replied the Chief of the Staff.

"You cannot rely on me!" was the angry retort.

"Do not fume, sir," said the aged Major kindly. "You are becoming purple yourself, sir, which seems a pity. Permit me to offer you a cup of hot soup and a mixed biscuit. They will revive you." And as he spoke the aged Major produced the refreshment from his sabretasche.

"One biscuit cannot be mixed," said the General, munching gloomily.

"Excuse me, sir," was the reply, "it is, or was, my own biscuit, and coming from a tin of mixed biscuits I maintain that it is and ever must be a mixed biscuit."

"A biscuit cannot mix itself," persisted the General.

"Once mixed, always mixed," retorted the aged Major.

"Pardon me," rejoined the General, "but your logic is fallacious. I will prove it to you thus. Last night after dinner I was somewhat mixed. But am I so now?"

"I see your point," said the Major, "and I take the opportunity to shift my ground. You have mixed the biscuit with the soup. Ergo, the biscuit is a mixed one."

"Oh! Dim!" cried the General with some asperity, "what does it matter? We have got on to a side issue. The real point is what is to be the colour of the hostile force."

Well, they argued for hours, all talking at once, and it was half-past three in the afternoon before the question was decided. The enemy's colour was to be Rob Roy Tartan, with lavender spots.

"For," concluded the General, "no one can mistake that."

There did not appear to be any necessity for the lavender spots, but as they were suggested by a young A.D.C. whose sister was a duchess, they were allowed to remain.

It was now, however, too late to continue the manœuvres, and the troops disbanded, singing, "It's another colour now," and "For he's a jolly good fellow," which seemed to reflect popular opinion. Soon the parade ground was deserted, and, as Johnny looked back at it, the only figure he saw was the aged Major, gazing wistfully at the setting sun, and singing softly to himself.

Johnny crept up quietly and listened to the strange song:



The Aged Major's Song.

I am an aged Major who
  Has sailed the wintry sea,
I like a peg, a strong cigar,
  And oysters with my tea.
I, open, frank, and hónest, am
  A worthy guide to youth,
But when I speak of Indian life
  I cannot speak the truth.

I hunt the tiger and the boar,
  The snipe and kangaroo,
And every one of them I kill
  I multiply by two.

It is a simple plan, you see,
  To gain a high repute,
And when you've got it few will dare
  Your statements to refute.

Here the Major stopped, and, eyeing Johnny gloomily, said, "You need not listen unless you like, but if you don't ——" and he paused ominously.

"If I don't?" asked Johnny.

"You will not hear it," was the reply.

I tell of how a tiger once
Assaulted me with teeth,
And how when I had lost my sword
I felled it with the sheath.
But oh! it breaks my heart to feel
The tale is heard with doubt,
A haunting fear is ever near
That I shall be found out.

For sometimes I will spin a yarn
And make myself the hero,
Of bloodshot snakes and burning lakes,
And oil that melts at zero.
And then again I'll tell the tale
Forgetting what I first said,
And say he was a friend of mine—
And so the tale is busted!

Although I am a Major, you
Observe my note is minor,
I've been to many lands, and I'm
A quite accomplished diner.
I suffer from the liver, too,
As every Major should.
I grumble at the break of day,
I think it does me good.

I am not all I ought to be,
I would not if I could,
And if I do not mean to be,
I shall not though I should;
But if I may, might, must, or can,
Ameliorate my lot,
I then may be such as you see,
At present I am not.

As he concluded the aged Major rose and walked towards the town, tripping at intervals over his sword. Johnny followed him, till suddenly remembering his engagement to tea at the Quart Pot's, he inquired of the aged Major the way thither.

"That is Soldiertown," pointed out the Major, indicating a large village chiefly composed of what appeared to be barracks, "and when you get there turn down Stagger Street, and go on to Lurching Lane, at the end of which you will find Reeling Road. No. 1 is the Quart Pot's address. Good evening!" and he disappeared along the dusty road.

As Johnny entered the town he observed with interest the advertisements with which the buildings were placarded. Some, he thought, were very curious indeed, such as

BEST ARMY AND NAVY BUTTER.

LUBRICATE YOUR CAREER WITH A. & N. BUTTER.

IT WILL MAKE YOU SEE STARS AND OTHER DECORATIONS.

CAN BE USED AS A SOAP, YIELDING BEAUTIFUL BUBBLES OF REPUTATION.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE.—Take a General or Admiral, according to taste, butter him well with best A. & N. Butter. Ask for what you want and see you get it.

"A Colonel" writes:—"During the war I applied A. & N. Butter freely to General Blank and soon after I received a staff billet at Stellenbosch."

The next placard Johnny noticed read as follows:

ARMY BOOTS.

THEY TAKE YOU *OFF* PARADE.

YOU CANNOT MARCH WITHOUT THEM.

"A Private" writes:—"This year I did a 31 days' march in Army boots, at the end of which I found it was the 1st of April."

GIVE THEM A TRIAL.

Be your own Judge.

YOUR FEET WILL BE AWARDED HEAVY DAMAGES.

"THERE'S NOTHING LIKE LEATHER!"
(IN THEIR COMPOSITION).

Johnny wanted to read them all, but as it was getting late he decided to waste no time. At last he reached No. 1, Reeling Road, and, knocking politely, he entered.

It was a curious tea-party, inasmuch as no one was drinking tea.

"Come in," said the Quart Pot, who was foaming at the mouth and evidently not in the best of tempers, "and sit down."

Johnny took a vacant chair at the table and furtively examined the company.



Tea at the Quart Pot's.

The Quart Pot as host was at the head of the table, and at intervals a waiter pumped beer into him. On his right sat the Big Drum and on his left the Bugle. The latter was a polished sort of fellow with a shrill, rasping voice. The next on the right and left were a rifle and a bayonet, and then came a sword. Johnny was never more surprised in his life to find all these creatures arguing and talking. He had always supposed them to be inanimate objects. But here they were as much alive as he was, each with head, arms, and legs appropriate to his figure.

"What would you like to drink?" inquired the Quart Pot, addressing Johnny.

"Oh!" replied the latter, "if there's any tea——"

But here such an extraordinary jingling occurred that Johnny's voice was drowned. He afterwards discovered that the noise was really the laughter of the company. It was certainly very metallic, with the exception of the Drum's, which was very like a distant storm.

"There is no tea here," explained the Quart Pot. "I drink beer, the Drum lives on sound, the Bugle on air, the Rifle swallows cartridges, the Sword drinks blood, and so does the Bayonet, so which will you have?"

"I think," said Johnny, "I will have nothing."

"We don't keep it."

"Try a beat on the chest," suggested the Drum moodily. "It's all I ever have for tea. Oblige me," he added to the waiter, who thereupon banged on him several times with a drum-stick.

"That will do," said the Drum, "I am better now."

"I don't think I should like it, thank you," pleaded Johnny; "you see, your skin is thicker than mine, and you've no inside."

"No personal remarks!" shouted the Quart Pot. "It's a pigskin, as we all know, but there is no occasion to remind him of it. And now to resume. We are engaged in a discussion as to which of us is the greatest friend of the soldier. I opine that I shall have no difficulty in convincing you, gentlemen, that I hold that honoured position."

"I like that," sneered the Sword, in a cutting manner.

"There you go, Sword," replied the Quart, "snap-snap-snapping as usual. I do not, gentlemen, dispute your various excellences, the necessity for your existence, however deplorable such a necessity may be, and the able manner in which you discharge your multifarious duties, but this I do affirm with all my strength, spirit, and——"

"Bitterness," growled the Big Drum, at which there was a general laugh, as this was a sore point with the Quart.

"That remark," observed the latter, with an unimpressive frown, "I regard as the expression of the bitterness of your own hollow organism. Airs ill become one who is by nature air-tight. But I pass it by. Who is it that stimulates the exhausted energies of an army corps? I do. To whom is it in his moments of hardship, weariness, or ennui that the soldier flies? To me. Who paints the glorious fantasies that inspire the soldier, fantasies which find their realisation when war affords the opportunity? I do. To whom in his moments of blinding victory, in his hour of success, and in his day of hard-earned promotion does the soldier turn? Again I say, to me." And here the Quart Pot leered ill-naturedly at the company, as much as to say, "Deny it if you dare."

"And who," suddenly cried the Bugle in a shrill voice, and surprising the company not a little by the temerity of his speech, "sends the soldier to the guard-room? You do."

There was a general jingle of applause at this, and the Bayonet whispered,

"That's a point against him." The Quart was tinkling all over with rage.

"You—you—you bumptious Bugle!" he roared. "You presume to insinuate that I am responsible for the abuse of my own virtues? You who make day and night hideous with your cat-calls and who cannot march without getting blown!" Then with a sudden lapse into what he meant to be dignity, but which really was the outcome of not knowing what to say, he added, "You ought to know better."

Meantime the Drum had risen, and giving himself a tremendous bang on the chest, which made the whole company vibrate, he cried, "Order!" whereupon the Quart sat down gloomily.

"As regards myself," said the Drum, when the vibration had ceased, "I am happy to think that I am a more agreeable subject for discussion. It is ever a pleasing thought to me that in no case do I lead the soldier to err. I am unaware of possessing any faults, unless, perhaps, the misfortune of occasionally bursting, and as that is generally due either to an imperfection of texture, climatic conditions, or carelessness on the part of a drummer, it is a calamity for which I cannot hold myself responsible. From time immemorial it has been mine to lead. 'Follow the Drum' is a watchword in the army. I regulate the pace of the march, I give a depth and grandeur to our warlike music, and to the warm heart of the veteran there is no sound so welcome, so inspiring, so reminiscent of the happy youth that is gone than the well-timed beat upon me that heralds the approach of troops. I will say no more."

"For the best of reasons," snarled the Quart, "namely, that there's nothing more to be said."

"I pass you by," answered the Drum calmly. "I make allowance for your wounded feelings."

The Quart was about to reply, when the Rifle rose to his feet, and, laying down his flannelette, addressed the company as follows:

"It is a matter of regret to me that I cannot under existing circumstances sing my own praises quite as much as I should like to. I am well aware that in the hour of trial—I refer, of course, to action in the field—I am, or ought to be, the best friend, the protector, and the means of ultimate victory to the soldier. That is if I perform my functions properly. I have certain good points I admit, and am to some extent—I do not say it with pride—showy. But I feel that I might be better-sighted, and if the nation will not pay an oculist to prescribe for and cure me, I cannot be expected to drive my bullets where they are desired to go. Again, at times, when I am called upon to do my most deadly work—I refer to magazine fire—I can give a good deal of trouble. It is true that often the cause is trivial, but I need not refer you to the old adage as to what trivial things may bring about. As to my rations, the cartridges with which I am fed are so varying in strength that I am at a loss to know how to digest them. In short, gentlemen, I will own to you that when I meet my old friend Mr. Martini-Henry, the sight of the worthy old veteran makes me blush. He has always been wise, strong, and trustworthy. I, cleverer and more brilliant, have the failing of other clever and brilliant folk, in that I am not always to be relied upon. I will not say more."

And here the Rifle sat down with a sad expression in his steel-grey eyes.

His speech led to a good deal of discussion, which in time became somewhat heated. The Big Drum and the Bayonet were quarrelling noisily, the former having much the best of the argument, as whenever the Bayonet essayed to speak the Drum banged his chest so violently that no one else could be heard. This mode of debate, I believe, is very fre-

quently adopted by other public characters.

"You puny little pocket-knife," the Drum was sneering, "you presume to pit your opinion against mine! You who snap or bend on the slightest provocation! Why, in damp weather you can't even keep yourself clean."

This was more than the little Bayonet could stand.

"You great puffed-up, empty-headed, hollow-bodied impostor, look out for yourself!"

And here he ran full tilt against the Drum, and although the Bugle tried to blow him off, succeeded in dashing his head against the Drum's chest, inflicting a clean-cut wound from which the prisoned air rushed forth.

"I believe you've bust me, Bayonet," said the Drum faintly as he rolled off his chair.

"You're right on that point," replied the Bayonet sombrely. "Let it be a lesson to you that the big and noisy people of this world are no match for the sharp though small."

Afraid of being involved in the general wrangle, Johnny here discreetly slipped out of the room, and, closing the door behind him, wandered into the street again.

To his amazement he found it was broad daylight.

"This is a strange thing," mused Johnny. "I wonder is it to-day or to-morrow? It certainly can't be yesterday."

Here he paused to think it out, and concluded that although he really couldn't understand it all, it didn't seem to matter much.

As he wandered about the town he began to feel quite hungry, and also at a loss as to how he was to get any food. Presently he noticed the Red General passing near, and, with a boldness that surprised himself, he walked up to this formidable personage, and, taking off his hat, politely remarked, "Excuse me, sir, but I am very hungry."

"Ha!" said the General, looking at



The Red General Roars.

Johnny very searchingly. "Physically, morally, or mentally?"

"I—I—I really don't know," pleaded the little fellow.

"But you said you were, and unless by now you're not, why then, of course, you are, you know."

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"Yes, sir," seemed to Johnny the only thing to say.

"I will put the matter more simply. Do you require food for the body or for the mind?"

"I would like it for the—for the ——" and here he stuttered painfully.

"Speak up," said the General gruffly.

"For the st—st—stomach," gasped Johnny.

"Thus then we find," argued the General loftily, "that you also require food for the mind, since as the proper balance of the mental faculties is dependent on the healthy condition of our corporeal organism, food for the body is indirectly but undoubtedly nutritive to the mind. So at least I have been informed by officers of my medical staff, who after many years of earnest study and grave debate have arrived at this conclusion. Now the mind being on a higher plane than the body, I propose first to give you mental food, and it conveniently happens that I am about to attend an army examination for my own promotion to the rank of Field-Marshal. I propose to take you there. You also may endeavour to pass. You may even assist me," and here the General's voice sank to a whisper, "if you observe that the attention of the examiners should at any time be diverted from me, for strange as it may seem there are some problems which Generals cannot grasp, problems which I have heard it said, any child could understand. *You* will be my 'any child.' Will this arrangement suit you?"

"Yes, sir," answered Johnny, who did not in the least comprehend what the General had been talking about. "Still, I'm very hungry."

"Ha!" said the General briefly, but with considerable meaning—a common procedure, by the way—and he produced from the inside of his cocked hat a pot of caviare, four pieces of buttered toast, and a lemon.

"There," said he, handing the food to Johnny, "there is caviare *from* the General. The toast is buttered with Army and Navy best butter. How do you like its flavour?"

"It seems to worry me," answered Johnny, as he devoured the toast eagerly. "It makes me feel as if I'd give anything for peace and quietness."

"Exactly so! Were you a high official you would give appointments, emoluments, etc. Curious, very, but a capital invention. And now come along."

And, taking Johnny's hand, the General led him down the main street till they reached a large building named "The Board of Examination." But the sight of this imposing and highly necessary institution had a sudden and very awful effect on the General. He stopped dead, and, becoming almost purple with excitement, he shook his first in the air and cried aloud:

"No! Never! At my time of life I'll have no more examinations! Britons never, never, never will be slaves—to intelligence! I'm going on strike!"

With that he struck Johnny a smack on the cheek, so stinging that with a yell

* * * *

He awoke!

So! It had all been a dream! And yet it had seemed horribly real!

FLOWERS OF THE BALLET

BY G. E. FARROW.



FLOWERS of the Ballet,
Vision entrancing,
Nightly we rally
Where thou art dancing;
Filled with delight
At the fair sight,
Retreating, advancing.

Flowers of the Ballet,
Nimble toe turning,
In Arcady's valley
Dull earth all spurning,
Witness me this:
Rapturous bliss
Sets our hearts burning.

Flowers of the Ballet,
Lo! in the morning
"Liza" and "Sally,"
Sans all adorning,
Look not the same.
Woe! for the fame
Turned now to scorning.



My Dear Sir.

THE STORY OF A BATSMAN AND A BOY.

By DOMINIQUE MONRO.

I.

WILSON—Wilson the Great—so-called, in the first place, for his length of limb, and, by the small boys, lovers of cricket, and local reporters, on account of his wonderful power with the bat—rose and stretched himself—stretched his long arms above his head, extending his hands, burnt to the colour of mahogany, to the deep blue of the heavens, then, with a sudden jerk, swinging them to his side again. Across the wooden fence that bordered the West Moorden cricket field his sharp eyes caught sight of a long, thin, curved line of white smoke; a train was entering the Moorden station—his attention was arrested. The heat of the merciless sun, which had compelled him to spend the morning at perfect ease, was forgotten; catching up his cap, he whistled to his two terriers and took great strides towards the gate. Once in the roadway he started running down the hill, well shaded by trees overhanging from his own orchard.

Half way down the incline Wilson was met by a brake full of young men, their cricket bags and clean, cool flannels proclaiming them to be the expected opposing force for that day's great match. But Wilson did not stop to speak to the team, who called greetings to him; he merely waved his hand, and made a rapid salute to the captain, who was riding on the box-seat, and then continued his trot down the hill.

A stream of pedestrians from the station wended their way towards him—onlookers for the event—and he scanned them closely. Wilson was evidently expecting someone! The ground he had just left was sprinkled already with a fair number of Moorden patrons, and his own team was in the pavilion ready; nevertheless, he steadily pursued his way to the station, hoping, expecting to see one face. What would the great match be without that one spectator? What availed the sunshine and the soft breeze, the crowded stands and the splendid wicket, if one face was missing, one pair of little hands not there to applaud him and his?

"Going to meet a friend, Wilson?" someone called to him as he ran. "Train has been in some minutes; she can't have come, old man!"

Wilson smiled to himself and turned into the station, nearly knocking over a woman with a basket on her arm in his haste. Raising his cap and offering apologies was the work of but a few moments, and his keen grey eyes scanned the small country station meanwhile. A light leaped into them, and he moved down the platform to where a cattle train was standing on a slip line. There was a car full of sheep uttering plaintive

sounds, and before them, bareheaded in the sunshine, holding a straw hat filled with clear water, enticing the sheep to drink from it, was a small boy! Wilson passed his large, burnt hand over the golden head.

After all, Sir Wilton was very good to him.

"Sonny," he said, and his steady voice did not betray the feelings in his heart—nothing really mattered now! Sonny had come! And as usual he was entire master of himself; he had been, by force of circumstances, all his life. "Sonny, old man, what are you about?"

"The poor fings, they's so very firsty," said Sonny, turning two large blue eyes, full of smiles and welcome, to Wilson the Great, in this instance Wilson the Well-beloved! "And I had to wait for you to fetch me, 'My dear Sir.'"

Wilson called to the stationmaster, and to Sonny's intense pleasure pointed out the scandal of letting the poor beasts remain there in the heat, when by shunting the truck some thirty yards they would be in the shade.

The humane stationmaster, who was an ardent admirer of the Cricketer, said he had not thought of it before, and would act on the suggestion, and Sonny thereby was content to leave the yard.

"You've nearly made me very late, old man," said the giant to the small boy; "I shall have to carry you," suiting the words to the action. "Your little legs would reach the top of the hill about lunch-time, and we hope to accomplish great things on the field before then."

Sonny took a deep breath. He was as happy as a boy could possibly be; his chubby right hand rested lovingly and confidingly on Wilson's shoulder as the giant strides brought them to the gate.

"I want to pay, please," said the young gentleman, slipping his hand into his pocket and producing a shilling in triumph; "it's 'My dear Sir's' ben'fit day. Grandpa said I might pay out of my money-box. I didn't want him to pay for me *to-day*."

"My dear Sir's" lips twitched, and the arm that supported the child pressed him closer; it was his hand, however, that took the shilling and not the gate-keeper's, and that same evening the coin was hanging round his neck on a silver chain. The Great Wilson's heart was too full to allow him to speak. He carried the boy to the seat he had set apart for him and his two little cousins with their German governess, relinquishing his precious burden to the accompaniment of "Ach himmel!" and similar pious ejaculations from Fraulein, then strode away to the pavilion, his head high in the air, his heart light and full of happiness.

More than one on the field that day talked of the extraordinary friendship that existed between the professional cricketer and the grandson of Sir Wilton Beresford, of Court Moorden. The crowd that had assembled to witness what promised to be the best match of the season was no ordinary crowd; ladies were well to the fore, pretty frocks and lace-covered sunshades making bright bits of colour here and there.

West Moorden was celebrated for its cricket eleven, a notable team in a county of such, and Wilson was an acknowledged bat of real excellence; hence all the inhabitants for many miles flocked to participate in the best matches, and Wilson's benefit day happened to be *the* fixture of the season.

Fraulein had her work cut out for her in keeping Sonny to her side. His enthusiasm when "My dear Sir" made his hundred up caused many to turn and look in their direction. Poor Fraulein blushed — "the colour of beetroot," Sonny declared, but he wasn't troubled a bit!

"I like everyone to know that I love

'My dear Sir," he said; "and he's the best cricketer in—in—all the world."

He was jerked back into his seat by his two cousins.

"Do sit still, Sonny!" said Lady Betty, aged six. And, wonderful to relate, Sonny sat still. Lady Betty was dark-eyed, with golden curls, and—well—Sonny loved her! But it was to Lady Marjorie he turned as he settled his small person comfortably back in his seat. "You love 'My dear Sir,' don't you, Marjorie?" he whispered. Marjorie would understand; why, she even played "tip and run" herself!

"I fink he's lovely!" said Marjorie, and Sonny squeezed her hand.

II.

"You can play cricket in the army, Oscar; and later on, perhaps, you will captain your regimental team."

Oscar—Sonny—grown to five feet ten, and to the dignity of his baptismal name in the household of his grandfather, flicked the dust from his pads with his glove meditatively; then his large blue eyes, which had lost none of their fascination, raised themselves and looked across the lawn to the cricket pitch, verdant, smooth, and perfect—all that money could make it, in fact, in spite of a long spell of dry, hot weather. There, standing with his back to the terrace, surrounded by a juvenile team of would-be cricketers, was the Great Wilson! Inflammation of the lungs had been the cause of an ordered rest, under threats of dire consequences were the orders not obeyed, and so for two months Wilson had not played for his county.

But at Oscar's instigation a scheme had been set on foot whereby the Cricketer had not been obliged to spend long hours in solitude in his small but picturesque cottage, with the orchard and old-world garden, for the neighbouring gentlemen asked him to mention his own terms for the instruction of promising boys in bowling and batting, and every Saturday witnessed a team of enthusiastic boys taking lessons from their patient instructor. But it was for Oscar's sake more than for the tempting fee that Wilson had undertaken the task. The place in his heart for the boy seemed to grow larger each year as different traits in Sonny's character revealed themselves.

On that particular Saturday Oscar had been called to the terrace to meet a reverend gentleman who had been engaged to tutor him during the holidays, and possibly to cram him for the army. Sir Wilton's heart was set on soldiering for his grandson; the chief argument he put forth for the purpose of winning the boy's heart to the service being expressed in those few words, "And later on, perhaps you will captain your regimental team!"

Oscar's eyes took in the scene before him—the eager faces of the boys, the beautiful condition of the wicket, the well-loved face of their instructor! The fire was in his veins, he swung his bat to his shoulder——

"Oh, I'd much rather play for my University!" he said suddenly. "Let me go to Cambridge, sir. I hate the thought of cramming for the army, and then being stuck in a garrison town, with the odds against my ever seeing service."

Sir Wilton's lips were drawn in a straight line across his teeth. "And after your college days, what do you propose doing then?" he said.

"Play for my county," laughed the boy impulsively, half hoping that the enthusiasm in his own breast would kindle a glow in the heart of the older man, and thereby make him overlook the want of seriousness.

"For your living?" there was no disguising the sneer.

Oscar's cheeks burned. He felt it was a hit at Wilson.

"But surely you are fond of cricket, too, sir," he said.

"It has been the curse of my life," thundered Sir Wilton. "There, go your own way. Your mother wished you should play for your college, so I will pay your expenses at Cambridge; after that I shall make you a small allowance and not trouble my head about you again." He walked away from the boy, who was dumfoundered by the first part of his grandfather's remark. How could anyone find cricket a curse?

He ran down the terrace steps and placed his arm affectionately through Wilson's.

"Do you know, 'My dear Sir,' the old man has set me wondering a goodish bit by a remark he has just made?" he said.

"Which means you want to tell me all about it, Sonny," Wilson made answer. "Out with it, then; I am all attention."

It was Sir Wilton himself who had supplied Sonny with the nick-name he invariably used when speaking to Wilson. The baronet's frequent "My dear Sir!" during a conversation with the Cricketer at which Oscar had been present, tickled that young man's fancy to such an extent that he had never called his friend anything else since.

"Well, he said cricket had been the curse of his life!" Sonny said, kicking a ball about with his foot thoughtfully.

But instead of the surprise and righteous indignation that Oscar expected, Wilson's cheeks, paler than usual owing to his enforced imprisonment and to the state of his health, took on a deep flush, and his teeth bit hard into his lip.

"So, he said that, did he? Truth is, Sonny, he objects to you associating so much with me! I—I'm only a professional cricketer; I'm not a gentleman, you know!"

"Pray, what *is* a gentleman, 'My dear Sir'?" asked Sonny. "Can you define it? You don't swear, drink, and make the beast of yourself that lots of the old man's intimates do! You don't lie, you play fair, you give way to everyone, you consider yourself last, and you avoid hurting anyone by a thoughtless word. What *is* a gentleman, if you are not one, 'My dear Sir'?" he repeated.

Wilson smiled. But the smile, to Sonny's mind, was too tinged with sadness to give that young man any pleasure.

But that night Wilson the Great stood before the baronet, who in short, jerky sentences endeavoured to put a stop to the friendship between his grandson and the batsman. The surest way to set to work! Wilson would never stand in the boy's light!

"You want to make him a gentleman," he said slowly in answer to the old man's repeated, "A soldier and a gentleman, my dear sir—a soldier and a gentleman." "But make him a man first. He cannot choose but be a gentleman; his mother—his mother was your daughter, you see!"

And in the silence of his own home the Cricketer extended his arms before him. "Oh, my God!" he groaned; "they will take the very sunshine from my life!"

III.

Everyone was talking of him, everyone congratulating him, and the boy's handsome face was full of smiles. The clear blue eyes were sparkling with pleasure. To be thumped on the back by older Blues, to be shaken hands with by the best bowler Oxford could show, to be greeted with compliments and unstinted praise wherever he moved on that memorable day, was enough to make any young man's heart glow with satisfaction; but to sit down to a splendid luncheon between Marjorie and Betty, and to be congratulated by the latter in a dear little old-fashioned sentence, set his

heart beating, as he himself put it, "nineteen to the dozen." Lord's was the only heaven on earth!

Marjorie had received by far the lesser share of the hero's attentions, when he suddenly turned to her and showed her a telegram. "It's from Wilson—'My dear Sir'; you must remember him, Marjorie. He had gone so completely out of my life that it is like a glimpse into the past. He always said whatever happened he would be the first to congratulate me on my first good innings, and luck favoured him. As I was coming across to the pavilion they handed me this wire, so I got his congrats first off. I was so glad—quite hysterical, do you know; dear old chap, to remember!"

Marjorie dived her white-gloved hands into the innermost recesses of a silk bag she had hanging from her waist and produced an orange-coloured envelope also.

"I've had a telegram, too," she said, and spread it open.

And though the conversation round them buzzed with the sound of his name, Oscar's attention was riveted on the message Marjorie had placed before him. Lord's—success—the beautiful light blue of his cap, lying on the table between them, faded into utter insignificance. Thus ran the message:

"Wilson 187, not out; wire bowling analysis later."

"I didn't even know he was playing," Oscar said quietly, his hand resting on the paper. "I've been so selfishly full of my own affairs that I have not followed his play this season. What a brute I am! This is famous! And against ——shire, too!"

"I follow his play always," said Lady Marjorie, nodding her head. "He didn't forget you, Oscar," was the reproof a moment later.

"Oh, he's the best fellow living," Oscar said gloomily; he was full of remorse.

"Well, it mustn't spoil your day. This is Your Day, Oscar, spelt with capital letters. I am proud to be sharing it with you. I didn't miss a stroke before lunch. 'My dear Sir' would be very angry if you spoilt your day by thinking of him. It ought to help you to enjoy it to think of his success."

"It makes me feel inconsequent," said Oscar; but something else was troubling the boy's mind and heart as well at that moment, and that was a sudden rush of affection for this little sad-eyed cousin who had, in a way, called him to book. Why had he always turned from her to Betty? Betty didn't know a bat from a bail! Betty was beautiful to look upon—but surely that wasn't the all-important thing in life. Had he been taken with her for her face only? Marjorie's heart was good and true. Marjorie was an excellent judge of a fellow's style in fielding. Marjorie was tender and kind; she had been heard to scold a friend for applauding a run obtained by an overthrow. "That isn't particularly clever of the batsman," she had said severely; "as a matter of fact, he could have got two off it without much exertion; and the long-off feels quite mad enough with himself for his miscalculated throw without being made to suffer by hearing the runs applauded, you know!" Good little Marjorie! What a companion she was! What a companion she would make a fellow for life! But the trouble in Oscar's heart was owing to the fact that more than one kind friend had linked his name and Betty's together! Was he in honour bound to her? At that point, however, his reflections were cut short. Someone was proposing his health, and, smiling, he stood to acknowledge it. Then, bending to Marjorie with a gleam in his eyes, he proposed the health of "Absent Friends and all cricketers good!"

The same evening found Oscar, his cousins, their mother, and three friends making their way to places in the stalls of a theatre. They had arrived late, and the place was almost in darkness. It was evident that the people in the row behind them had not recognised the young cricketer, since, in whispers, they continued their conversation, in which Oscar's name figured conspicuously. The boy's party exchanged smiling glances as they took their places, but Oscar himself could not refrain from listening to the speakers.

"You know, he comes of a cricket-loving family," one was saying.

"Means me as a representative," put in Marjorie in a low voice. Oscar laughed, and looked at her bright face. So *she* was interested, too.

"You knew about his mother?" the same voice continued.

"Heard something about it."

"Oh, she ran away with a fellow—not a gentleman at all—some professional player—fell in love with his style!"

"Really!"

"She left him, however, went home again, and died there. Said he wasn't able to support her in luxuries."

Oscar's face grew rigid. He heard Marjorie's startled "Oh!" but took no notice of it.

"Sir Wilton," continued the man in the row behind, little dreaming by whom he was overheard, "promised to bring up the little chap she left, as his own son, on condition the father never once put forward a claim to him."

"And the father consented?"

"He said that for ten years at all events he would leave him in ignorance so long as he might be allowed to see him now and again, and that after that time the boy should decide for himself. Then one day the child gave vent to his feelings in a way that showed the father how happy he was in the ignorance of his real parentage, and the poor father said that *he* would never undeceive him."

"Is the father dead?"

"No, that is what made me tell you; it's that chap who was so hurt to-day; he got a thundering smack on his chest with a ball in the match against —— shire. Odd that his son should be unconsciously enjoying the height of his success at the moment that his father received his death-blow, for they say Wilson can't get over it. Hæmorrhage, internal—quite shocking, you know."

"Wilson!"

Oscar scarcely knew who said the name —Marjorie, the man behind them, or himself. All he knew was that the blood was surging through his veins, his head was reeling, his heart—breaking!

Marjorie put her hand on his arm, her face was pale, and her eyes moist, and although Betty sat staring straight before her to all appearances, she and the rest of the party were lost in the comedy they had come to witness.

"O God!" Sonny groaned. "My father!"

Marjorie pressed his arm. "Aren't you glad, glad, glad?" she cried.

"I must go, Marjorie! I must go straight to him!"

"Take him my love and my thanks; the latter for having made you what you are, Sonny."

He turned to Betty, half thinking to make a feeble excuse to her for his sudden flight, and to leave it to Marjorie to give them all the facts of the case, but Betty forestalled him by saying, "Father told me to-day; you see, people seemed to expect us to—to marry, but—I can't —I—you see, your father—isn't a gentleman." She, too, had forgotten the Comedy in the Tragedy.

* * * *

The garden gate swung on its hinges, someone's footsteps were coming up the gravel walk towards him, but he did not

move; seated on the trunk of a fallen tree, his head on his hands, he stared life in the face, even as, one short hour ago, his friend—*his father*—had stared Death!

But when a shadow fell across the grass at his feet, he lifted his blue eyes and then sprang forward.

"Marjorie!"

"Am I too late?"

His lips quivered, the boy's blue eyes were swimming in tears.

"But you were in time?" gently.

"Oh, yes, he—he said I helped him to die well. O God, help *me!*"

There was a long pause.

"I shall never go back to Sir Wilton; he deceived me. I must live alone. *His* life," jerking his head in the direction of the house—"he wished it—at the end. Just told me to live a clean life, an honest life—and to be no man's slave."

"Alone?" she repeated slowly.

"It must be alone, Marjorie; you are the only one I love of my mother's people, and I shall never see them again. It will be uphill work winning the respect of 'My dear Sir's' people. I'm glad, oh, I'm glad I knew, and was able to call him 'Father.' I think it was that that made him die happy. There is no one to help me to live!"

He was twisting something round in his hand; she took his hand in hers and looked.

"Yes," he said, with a short, sad laugh, "I—tipped him a shilling once—for his benefit!"

She was struggling with her emotion. "He must have prized it to have kept it all this time. Oscar—may I have it?—am I worthy, dear?" Her eyes met his, and for a moment they looked at each other in silence; then—he flung his strong arms round her and he would not let her go.

A short while later she lifted her face. "Then," she said shyly, tears of joy in her eyes, "there is someone to help you to live?"

And thus it came about that Wilson the Great brought two young hearts together.





OUR DAUGHTERS—STILL GROWING?

And yet they say the English race is degenerating!

A WEDDING GIFT



BY

H. Rider Haggard

FOOTPRINTS—footprints—the footprints of one dead. How ghastly they look as they fall before me! Up and down the long hall they go, and I follow them. *Pit, pat* they fall, those unearthly steps, and beneath them starts up that awful impress. I can see it grow upon the marble, a damp and dreadful thing.

Tread them down; tread them out; follow after them with muddy shoes, and cover them up. In vain. See how they rise through the mire! Who can tread out the footprints of the dead?

And so on, up and down the dim vista of the past, following the sound of the dead feet that wander so restlessly, stamping upon the impress that will not be stamped out. Rave on, wild wind, eternal voice of human misery; fall, dead footsteps, eternal echo of human memory; stamp, miry feet; stamp into forgetfulness that which will not be forgotten.

And so on, on to the end.

* * * *

Pretty ideas these for a man about to be married, especially when they float into one's brain at night like ominous clouds into a summer sky, and one is going to be married to-morrow. There is no mistake about it—the wedding I mean. To be plain and matter-of-fact, why there are the presents, or some of them, and very handsome presents they are, ranged in solemn rows upon the long table. It is a remarkable thing to observe when one is going to make a really satisfactory marriage, how hundreds of unsuspected friends crop up around one and send little tokens of their esteem. It was very different when I married my first wife, I remember, but then that marriage was not satisfactory. There they stand in solemn rows, as I have said, and inspire

me with beautiful thoughts about the native kindness of human nature, especially the human nature of one's distant cousins. It is possible to grow very poetical over a silver teapot when one is going to be married to-morrow. On how many future mornings shall I be confronted with that teapot? Probably for all my life; and on the other side of the teapot will be the cream jug, and the electro-plated urn will hiss away behind them both. Also the chased sugar basin will be in front, full of sugar, and behind everything will be my wife. "My dear," she will say, "will you have another cup of tea?" and probably I shall have another cup.

Well, it is very curious to notice what ideas will come into a man's head sometimes. Sometimes something waves a magic wand over his being, and from the recesses of his soul dim things arise and walk. At times they come, at times he grows aware of the issues of his mysterious life, and his heart shakes and shivers like a lightning-shattered tree; and in that drear light all earthly things seem far, and all unseen things draw near and take shape and awe him, and he knows not what is true and what is false, neither can he trace the edge that marks off the Spirit from the Life. Then it is that the footsteps echo, and the ghostly footprints will not be stamped out.

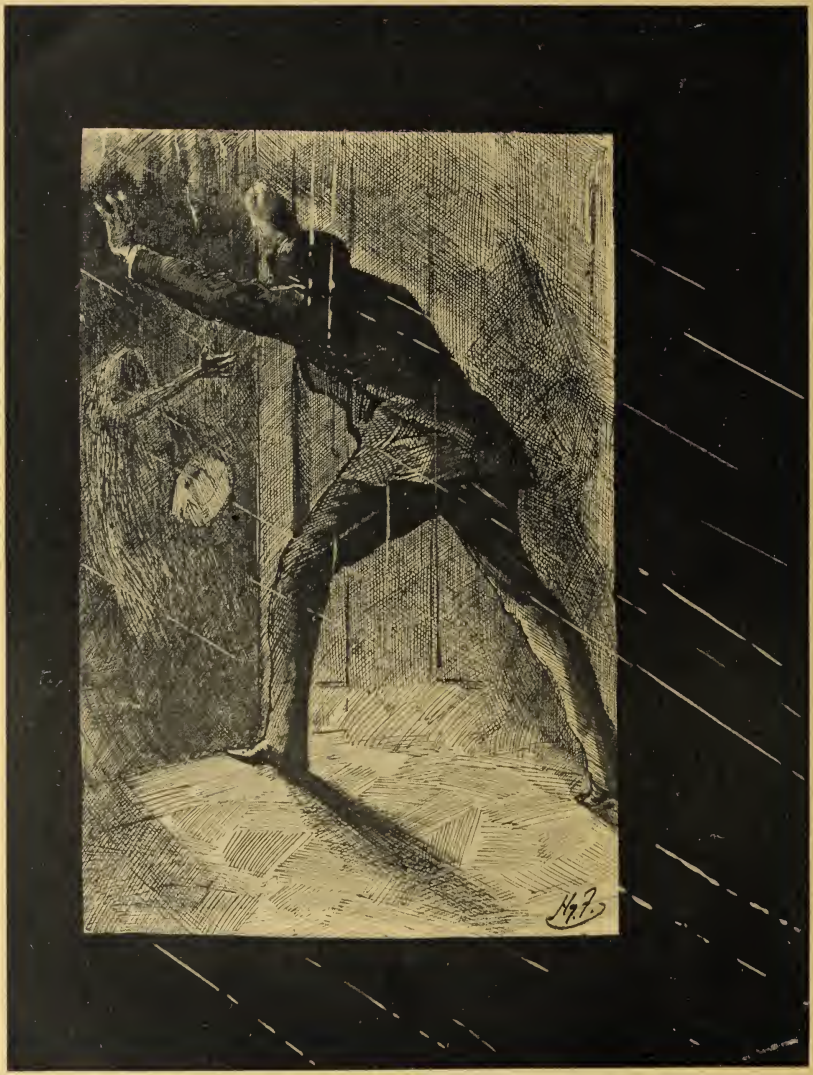
Pretty thoughts again! and how persistently they come! It is one o'clock, and I will go to bed. The rain is falling in sheets outside. I can hear it lashing against the window panes, and the wind wails through the tall wet elms at the end of the garden. I could tell the voice of those elms anywhere; I know it as well as the voice of a friend. What a night it is; we sometimes get them in this part of England in October. It was just such a night when my first wife died, and that is three years ago. I remember how she sat up in her bed.

"Ah! those horrible elms," she said; "I wish you would have them cut down, Frank; they cry like a woman," and I said I would, and just after that she died, poor dear. And so the old elms stand, and I like their music. It is a strange thing; I was half broken-hearted, for I loved her dearly, and she loved me with all her life and strength, and now—I am going to be married again.

"Frank, Frank, don't forget me!" Those were my wife's last words; and, indeed, though I am going to be married again to-morrow, I have not forgotten her. I shall never forget how Annie Guthrie (whom I am going to marry now) came to see her the day before she died. I know that Annie always liked me more or less, and I think that my dear wife guessed it. After she had kissed her and bid her a last good-bye, and the door had closed, she spoke quite suddenly: "There goes your future wife, Frank," she said; "you should have married her at first instead of me; she is very handsome and very good, and she has two thousand a-year; *she* would never have died of a nervous illness." And she laughed a little, and then added, suddenly, "Oh, Frank dear, I wonder if you will think of me before you marry Annie Guthrie. Wherever I am I shall be thinking of you."

And now the time that she foresaw has come, and Heaven knows that I have thought of her, poor dear. Ah! those footsteps of one dead that will echo through our lives, those woman's footprints on the marble flooring which will not be stamped out. Most of us have heard and seen them at some time or other, and I hear and see them very plain to-night. Poor dead wife, I wonder if there are any doors in the land where you have gone, through which you can creep out to look at me to-night? I hope that there are none. Death must, indeed, be a hell if the dead can see and feel and take measure of the forgetful faithless-

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"It was short and shrunken, the figure of a tiny woman."

ness of their beloved. Well, I will go to bed and try and get a little rest. I am not so young or so strong as I was, and this wedding wears me out. I wish that the whole thing were done or had never been begun.

* * * *

What was that? It was not the wind, for it never makes that sound here, and it was not the rain, for the rain has ceased its surging for a moment; nor was it the howling of a dog, for I keep none. It was more like the crying of a woman's voice; but what woman can be abroad on such a night or at such an hour—half-past one in the morning?

There it is again—a dreadful sound; it makes the blood turn chill, and yet has something familiar about it. It is a woman's voice calling round the house. There she is at the window now, and rattling it, and, great heavens! she is calling me.

"Frank! Frank! Frank!" she calls.

I strive to stir and unshutter the window, but before I can get there she is knocking and calling at another.

Gone again, with her dreadful wail of "Frank, Frank!" Now I hear her at the front door, and, half mad with a horrible fear, I run down the long, dark hall and unbar it. There is nothing there—nothing but the wild rush of the wind and the drip of the rain from the portico. But I can hear the wailing voice going round the house, past the patch of shrubbery. I close the door and listen. There, she has got through the little yard, and is at the back door now. Whoever it is, she must know the way about the house. Along the hall I go again, through a swing door, through the servants' hall, stumbling down some steps into the kitchen, where the embers of the fire are still alight in the grate, diffusing a little warmth and light into the dense gloom.

Whoever it is at the door is knocking now with her clenched hand against the hard wood, and it is wonderful, though she knocks so low, how the sound echoes through the empty kitchens.

There I stood and hesitated, trembling in every limb; I dared not open the door. No words of mine can convey the sense of utter desolation that overpowered me. I felt as though I was the only living man in the whole world.

"*Frank! Frank!*" cries the voice with the dreadful familiar ring in it. "Open the door; I am so cold. I have so little time."

My blood stood still, and yet my hands were constrained to obey. Slowly, slowly I lifted the latch and unbarred the door, and, as I did so, a great rush of air snatched it from my hands and swept it wide. The black clouds had broken a little overhead, and there was a patch of blue, rain-washed sky with just a star or two glimmering fitfully in it. For a moment I could only see this bit of sky, but by degrees I made out the accustomed outline of the great trees swinging furiously against it, and the rigid line of the coping of the garden wall beneath them. Then a whirling leaf hit me smartly on the face, and instinctively I dropped my eyes on to something that as yet I could not distinguish—something small and black and wet.

"What are you?" I gasped. Somehow I seemed to feel that it was not a person—I could not say, *Who* are you?

"Oh, don't you know me?" wailed the voice, with the far-off familiar ring about it. "And I mayn't come in and show myself. I haven't the time. You were so long opening the door, and I am so bitterly cold—oh, so cold! Look there, the moon is coming out, and you will be able to see me. I suppose that you long to see me, as I have longed to see you."

As the figure spoke, or rather wailed, a moonbeam struggled through the watery air, and fell on it. It was short and shrunken, the figure of a tiny wo-

man. Also it was dressed in black and wore a black veil thrown over the whole head, shrouding it, after the fashion of a bridal veil. From every part of this veil and dress the water fell in heavy drops. The figure bore a small basket on her left arm, and her hand—such a poor thin little hand—gleamed white in the moonlight. I noticed that on the third finger was a red line, showing that a wedding-ring had once been there. The other wrist and hand was stretched towards me as though in entreaty. All this I saw in an instant, as it were, and as I saw it horror seemed to grip me by the throat as though it were a living thing, for as the voice had been familiar, so was the form familiar, though the churchyard had received it long years ago. I could not speak—I could not even move.

"Oh, don't you know me yet?" wailed the voice; "and I have come from so far to see you, and I cannot stop. Look, look," and she began to pluck feverishly with her poor thin hand at the black veil that enshrouded her. At last it came off, and, as in a dream, I saw what in a dim frozen way I had expected to see—the white face and pale yellow hair of my dead wife. Unable to speak or to stir, I gazed and gazed. There was no mistake about it, it was she! ay, even as I had last seen her, white with the whiteness of death, with purple circles round her eyes and the grave-cloth yet beneath her chin. Only her eyes were wide open and fixed upon my face; and a lock of the soft yellow hair had broken loose, and the wind tossed it.

"You know me now, Frank—don't you, Frank? Oh, it has been so hard to come and see you, and so cold! But you are going to be married to-morrow, Frank; and I promised—oh, a long time ago—to think of you when you were going to be married wherever I was, and I have kept my promise, and I have come from where I am and brought a present with me. Oh, it was hard to die so young! I was so young to die and leave you, but I had to go. Take it—take it; be quick, I cannot stay any longer. *I cannot give you my life, Frank, so I have brought you my death—take it.*"

And the figure thrust the basket into my hand, and as it did so the rain came up again, and began to obscure the moonlight.

"I must go, I must go," went on the dreadful familiar voice, in a cry of despair. "Oh, why were you so long opening the door? I wanted to talk to you before you married Annie; and now I shall never see you again—never! never! *never!*"

And as the last wailing notes died away the wind came down with a rush and a whirl, and the sweep as of a thousand wings, and threw me back into the house, bringing the door to with a crash after me.

* * * *

I staggered into the kitchen, the basket in my hand, and set it on the table. Just then some embers of the fire fell in, and a faint little flame rose and glimmered on the bright dishes on the dresser, even revealing a tin candlestick, with a box of matches by it. I was well-nigh mad with the darkness and fear, and, seizing the matches, I struck one, and held it to the candle. Presently it caught, and I glanced round the room. It was just as usual, as the servants had left it, and above the mantelpiece the eight-day clock ticked away solemnly. As I looked at it it struck two, and in a dim fashion I was thankful for its friendly sound.

Then I looked at the basket. It was of very fine white plaited work with black bands running up it, and a chequered black-and-white handle. I knew it well. I have never seen another like it. I bought it years ago at Madeira, and gave it to my poor wife. Ultimately it

was washed overboard in a gale in the Irish Channel. I remember that it was full of newspapers and library books, and I had to pay for them. Many and many is the time that I have seen that identical basket standing there on that very kitchen table, for my dear wife always used it to put flowers in, and the shortest cut from that part of the garden where her roses grew was through the kitchen. She used to gather the flowers, and then come in and place her basket down on the table, just where it stood now, and order the dinner.

All this passed through my mind in a few seconds as I stood there with the candle in my hand, feeling indeed half dead, and yet with my mind painfully alive. I began to wonder if I had gone asleep, and was the victim of a nightmare. No such thing. I wish it had only been a nightmare. A mouse ran out along the dresser and jumped on to the floor making quite a crash in the silence.

What was in the basket? I feared to look, and yet some power within me forced me to it. I drew near to the table and stood for a moment listening to the sound of my own heart. Then I stretched out my hand and slowly raised the lid of the basket.

"I cannot give you my life, so I have brought you my death." Those were her words; what could she mean—what could it all mean? I must know or I shall go mad. There it lies, whatever it is, wrapped up in linen.

Ah, heaven help me! It is a small bleached human skull.



Motorphobia.

(THE INCOHERENT REFLECTIONS OF THE MOTORIST WHO HAS BEEN CAUGHT NEAR ANDOVER BY A CONSTABLE WHO HID IN A PIG-STYE.)

By MAX PEMBERTON.

He had no little handkerchief
To blow his little nose;
His boots were nineteen inches long—
His cheeks a blushing rose.

He spied me in a motor-car,
Bleared was his timely eye—
"It's forty mile an hour," said he—
"Do you think as *I* could lie?"

I thought so, but why mention it?
He was a vulgar man,
And who knows what his "could"
might be,
If I had said, "You can"?

* * * *

The blessed motor-man looked up
From the bare bars of prison;
'Tis better to pay ten and costs
Than days to do your seven.

The beak looked wise, the beak looked
black,
And this he said: "I axes,
If we don't fine these motorists,
Who's going to pay my taxes?"

* * * *

I saw him but a moment,
But methinks I see him now
In a pig-trough by the farmhouse,
With a crown upon his brow.



THE IMPERIAL EXCHANGE AND MART.

An Anglo-American Magnet of great power in exchange for a Kitchener.

On a Dutch Ship.

By BART KENNEDY.

I WAS wondering how I would get over the Atlantic when I saw an advertisement that read to the effect that one could get a passage from London to New York for two pounds ten. It was the very thing, for all I had between myself and nothing was four pounds. I had only been in London a week, and didn't know a soul, and the thought of staying there till my funds withered made me shiver. The greatness and loneliness of London were too much for me. I had friends in New York, and my week's residence in the world's big town had given me a desire to see them. Though I was an Englishman born, I could not stand the thought of being hard up and unknown in London. The town looked too big—and too cold.

Two pounds ten! For two pounds ten I could get a steerage passage to New York on a Dutch ship, going by way of Rotterdam. The steamship company's office was somewhere in Fleet Street, and I at once hurried there. The clerk in charge was a little, dried-up old Scotchman, with a sense of humour.

He asked me a great many pointed questions when I applied for my ticket. He explained, however, that it was not mere idle curiosity that prompted his questioning. It was the American Government that was the cause of it. He said it was very particular about the moral character and financial status of steerage passengers. Amongst other things he asked me if I had ever been in gaol.

I gave such answers as accorded with the description of a person of most deserving character, and then the old Scotchman gave me my ticket. I was to go to Harwich and from Harwich to Rotterdam, where I was to take the steamer for New York.

I came out of the office with a relieved heart and a pocket lighter by two pounds ten. I was safe as far as the crossing of the ocean was concerned. It was only a little over a fortnight before that I had left New York with a friend. He had invited me to come along and see what London was like. We had a gay and lively time crossing on a big German liner. After we had been a few days together in London he had left me. He had gone off to wander about the Continent, but before going he had given me money enough and to spare to pay my way back in first-class style. But the money had dwindled.

I had never crossed the ocean before as a steerage passenger. I had gone over several times as a sailor—once as a coal-passer in the stoke-hole—and once as a first-cabin passenger, when I had accompanied my bibulous and wealthy friend. I looked, therefore, on the coming trip as a Spartan experiment.

Two days afterwards I was in the train going to Harwich. My luggage was with me in a handbag. The old Scotchman had guided and chaperoned myself and others to the station. Before leaving us he gave us some pointed advice, salted with dry humour.

I was in with a crowd of working men, who were going out to seek their fortune in the land of the free. The fact of my having been in America before made me a person of importance in their eyes. I was deluged with questions as to the habits and customs prevailing in the country, and the chances of making a fortune therein. I answered all the questions in a suitable and interesting manner. Oddly enough they did not seem to think it strange that a man who had dwelt for so long a time in such a fine and glorious country should be reduced to taking a passage for two pounds ten. They were the most trustful and confident men I have ever had the good fortune to meet.

The interest I evoked was most gratifying and pleasing to me, as it meant a constant stream of invitations to have a drink. By this time all I had left was a paper dollar and two shillings in English money. I had bought the dollar before I left London, so that I would have it when I landed in New York. I did not like the idea of getting there without a cent. The two shillings, of course, vanished in no time, and I was reduced to the necessity of making myself agreeable and informing, so that I could ease my thirst.

We had to wait two days in Rotterdam, and the steamship company put us up at a place that seemed to me to be a cross between a workhouse and a cheap hotel. Here we were joined by a number of Dutch and German emigrants. The ship that was to take us over was the "Maasdam," and she was not yet ready. It would take her about twelve days to cross the Atlantic.

We had to toe the mark whilst we were waiting in the hotel—to be in bed by a certain time, to be up by a certain time, and to generally make ourselves as unobjectionable as possible.

In Rotterdam the first thing that struck me was the cheapness of tobacco. But, alas! I had no money to invest. All that I had was the solitary paper dollar. I had, of course, my agreeable and informing manner, but I feared to work it too heavily. There is a limit to all wants, and it seemed to me that I had given my fellow-passengers about all the information they could conveniently carry. At last we were aboard the "Maasdam," steaming easily down the River Maas. And soon we were out at sea, rolling and pitching.

At sea I came to the fore again, for my experience on the decks of all sorts of ships had made me impervious to seasickness. While nearly all the other passengers were lying about in a state of helpless pessimism, I was lively and chipper, and on the scout round for an invitation to have a drink. The not having a halfpenny to bless myself with bothered me awfully. Many times I was on the point of breaking into my solitary dollar, but I had to refrain. It wouldn't do to land in New York with absolutely nothing. So I made myself useful and helpful and cheering to the seasick ones. In cases of necessity I piloted them carefully to the bar when they needed revivers. But now and then came the sad reflection that they would soon get well, and that I would find my occupation gone. However, I determined to let tomorrow take care of itself. I would have to think of some other game by the time they got their sea-legs.

The reason that passengers get so helpless when they are sea-sick is because they allow themselves to give way to it. If, instead of turning in, they got up and knocked about on deck, they would feel ever so much better, and the sickness would soon pass off. Lots of sailors get sea-sick—indeed, some of them are always a little sick at the beginning of a voyage. But they have to turn out and do their work for all that. A

passenger, however, has nothing to do, and so there comes the time of helplessness. When sick, the best thing to do is to keep on deck and fight it. Don't go below. This is a sailor's tip.

Things went on in a curious, easy, come-day, go-day style aboard this Dutch ship. The crew did their work without strain or noise, and there was no swearing or bullying. Even the mate was a quiet kind of a man. And you would hardly have known that the captain was aboard.

The food that we got in the steerage, however, was just a little off the mark. But I suppose it was good enough for two pounds ten. One can't get something for nothing. I used to think sadly of the last trip I had made over the ocean with my bibulous and free-hearted friend. We had lashin's and lavin's of the best—beer, wine, whisky, and the finest of food. The contrast, of course, was interesting—but unpleasantly interesting. I was not then reduced to being an imaginative raconteur and a helper of the sea-sick for drinks of whisky of a more than doubtful quality.

The Dutchmen were all right, but I must confess that the cheese they gave us to eat in the steerage was most awful. It was filled with some kind of spice, and to me it tasted like some kind of tallow impregnated with camphor. I have never been able to stand Dutch cheese since that time, though I have heard that some of it is good eating. This steerage cheese was with me at all the meals a weird, perpetual, untouchable delicacy.

There were a few cabin passengers aboard, but we steerageites had the run of the whole deck of the ship. The cabinites gave themselves no lofty, lordly airs. They talked to us and chummed up with us on deck. Indeed, one of them took quite an interest in my humble self. He, like almost all the other passengers, had never been in America, and, needless to say, I let on at full tap my flow of valuable information. I pictured vividly to him the wonders of the United States and the chances there were in it for smart young men to make their fortunes. I suggested, of course, that he was just the right kind of young man to conquer the country—but I had to be deft and delicate in my method of suggesting, as he was a young English-speaking Dutchman of intelligence. He behaved extremely well in the matter of invitations to imbibe—bringing me to the bar that was supposed to be set apart for the cabin passengers. I would have much preferred, however, if I could have dined with him. He himself had thought of it, but it was impossible. Though the discipline aboard the boat was elastic enough it would not stretch quite so far as this. I do believe that if I had had a few good meals during the voyage I would not have been plagued with such an incessant thirst. If I had possessed a little money over the solitary paper dollar I could have got what food I wanted from the cook in the galley.

It was in the month of June, and we had some beautiful days. I was fond of standing on the fore-deck and looking aft out on the ocean. The colour and changing hues of the ocean were so wonderful. Hour after hour I would stand and look out upon the great, dark, mysterious water with its shining surface. Through the shining one could see the dark, deep strangeness beneath. As the hours passed the colours and hues changed. There was no monotony, if one had eyes to see. The colours of today were not the colours of yesterday. I was looking out upon a tremendous, heaving, subtly-changing scape of waters. It reflected wonderfully the sun and the odd-shaped, moving clouds.

* * * *

One day I was talking with the steward about the losing of ships at sea. He had

lost two ships, he said. His meaning was that he had been steward aboard them at the time.

I found it difficult to get from him an impression of the scenes through which he had passed. He was not a man who had much power of expression. But he told me a curious fact that had struck him. When the waters were closing in on them, and death was at hand, the women behaved with more calmness and bravery than did the men. They were less afraid of facing the last terrible moment. A great number of the men passengers lost their heads and some of them had to be used roughly so as to stop them from getting out of hand; but the women, as a rule, kept their heads and did what they were told. The same thing had occurred on both ships.

On the seventh day out it blew up hard, and all the passengers were kept below. I had to submit to the indignity myself—I, who had been a sailor, and who had helped to take in frozen sails on a wind-jammer as she was rounding Cape Horn. But aboard ship a passenger is a passenger. I had paid my passage, and was therefore entitled to be battened down below with the rest of the greenhorns when it blew up a bit fresh. I was glad when the blow was over and I could come up and breathe.

By this time the steerageites were getting well and hearty, and beginning to use their legs with some slight intelligence. They were beginning to stop falling all over themselves when the hulk rolled a little. And they got confident and easy and at themselves again. It was at this stage of the voyage where I had to jump in and do a little peacemaking. The Englishmen began to fall out with their Dutch and German fellow-passengers. I would never have interfered, but the rows usually began at night—about the time when one wanted to turn in. An Englishman would call a German a German, and the German would retort by calling the Englishman an Englishman. And there you had it. It was human, to be sure, but it was annoying—when one wanted to sleep. I need hardly say that I neither got thanks nor drinks for stopping these rows. I was looked upon as being rather unpatriotic by my countrymen, and as not being a German by the Germans. But the fact of having been in America gave me a sort of influence over them—at least, I suppose it must have been this that accounted for the success of my peacemaking efforts.

When we were within a day or two of New York the doctor told us that we would all have to be vaccinated. It came upon us as a dire blow. The Germans and the Dutch submitted with hardly a murmur to the doctor's order, but the Englishmen grumbled, as usual, and said they wouldn't stand it. And I, too, grumbled. I joined in with my crusted compatriots, and we stood off together at the back of the steerage whilst the Germans and the Dutch were going like lambs through the operation. One of my countrymen proposed the singing of "Rule, Britannia." Evidently he thought that it ill became a Britisher to submit to being vaccinated by a foreigner, and I must confess that I was at one with him on that idea. So on grounds that were at once personal and patriotic, I joined in the singing of the air.

But the doctor brought us to time. He was a persuasive man of tact. He told us that it was not his fault that we were asked to submit to such a thing. We let him know that we didn't care whose fault it was. We wouldnt stand it! And then he played his trump-card. He said we would have to come back again.

At this we surrendered and went through with it.

At last we were in port, but to my astonishment we were not allowed to

land. We were taken off on a tender to go through the ordeal at Ellis Island. Whilst in a vague way I had heard something about emigrants and Ellis Island (when I was in America before), I had no idea of the nature of the test through which steerage passengers are put on their arrival in New York.

We were taken to a big building in the island and put into pens—just like cattle. And then we were taken out one by one and asked all sorts of questions by rude officials—both men and women. Commend me to a republic for the rude official.

Really, I was astonished. One would think that one was knocking at the gate of an El Dorado to be allowed to come in and pick up the gold. The Americans put on too much side about their country. It is in no sense the best country in the world—nor the most free. I have lived in it for twelve years, and know something about it. England, with all its faults, is by far a freer country, and a better country for the working man. The English workman who goes to the States with the idea of bettering his condition of life is a fool. And he must pass through a degrading ordeal to get into the wonderful country.

We were back again on the Maasdam. We had gone through the ordeal and were free to go our various ways. Down the gang-plank I rushed with my hand-bag, and in a few moments I had changed my solitary dollar and was sitting in an elevated railway car, going swiftly up town.





THE NO HAT MOVEMENT.

" 'Etty, where's yer 'at? "
" 'At? Why, doncherknow no lydy walks hout with a 'at?—it ain't the fashion! "



WARE WIRE!

Jack Jumps, from Australia, following the Easyshire Hounds: "Hang it all, they do stick this infernal barbed wire high in the Old Country! I thought I had cleared the wretched hedge!"



As no publication nowadays is complete without a competition of some kind, the Editor hereby offers a prize to the best solution of the following headless celebrities. The most successful correspondent sending these pages with the correct heads added will receive the original drawings complete. All replies to be forwarded to the publishers before April 1, 1906.



The task is a very simple one. For instance, here is an obvious portrait of a past celebrity——

——and here is one of the present day.







THE THREE (POLITICAL) MUSKETEERS ?





THIS POLITICIAN IS NOT EASILY DRAWN.

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.



"It had suddenly grown a pair of legs and a pair of arms."

The Land of the Wonderful Co.

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

By W. KAYESS.

"MEG," said Tom, "I'll ask you a riddle. Why does a miller wear a white hat?"

Meg was cosily curled up in an easy chair. It was so cold and windy out of doors that she had taken a book into the nursery, and settled down to spend a lazy morning. She had not found the story particularly interesting, and was beginning to feel very drowsy when her brother came into the room. She had never heard that riddle before, though it is as old as the *mills*; she did not know the answer, and she felt too sleepy to try and guess it. So she only yawned and said: "I give it up. What is the answer?"

"I shan't tell you," said Tom. "Find out, if you want to know." And he went away to feed his rabbits.

Meg got more and more drowsy, and was just on the point of going to sleep altogether, when a queer noise, something between a whistle and a sneeze, made her start up and look round. There was nobody in the room, and Meg had come to the conclusion that she must have been dreaming, when the sound was repeated, and this time there was no doubt that it came from Tom's kite, which was hanging on the wall. The kite was a very large one. Tom had made it himself, and he had painted a face on one side of it. As Meg looked at the kite one of the big eyes winked at her most distinctly, the great mouth puckered itself up and blew another whistle louder than the last.

"Hullo there!" said the kite.

"Hullo!" said Meg.

"Lazybones!" exclaimed the kite, making a very ugly grimace.

"I'm not lazy," replied the child. "Only it's so horribly windy out of doors."

"Windy weather is the only sort I like," remarked the kite. "I'm longing for a breath of fresh air. Take me out and fly me, there's a good girl!"

"Very well, if you like," said Meg, good-naturedly.

She was just going to take the kite from its nail when it dropped on to the floor of its own accord. It had suddenly grown a pair of legs and a pair of arms, and trotted out of the door, holding its ball of string in one hand and its long tail gracefully slung over the other arm. Meg followed it downstairs, through the garden, and across the road to the large common that lay in front of the house.

"Now then," said the kite. "You hold the string, and I'll start myself. One, two, three, and off!"

As the kite said "Off!" it jumped high into the air, and began to fly up and away at a great pace. Meg unwound the string, and then, finding that it cut her fingers, tied it round her waist. As she

watched the kite she was surprised to see that it had grown enormously; it looked as big as a balloon, and pulled so hard that she had to follow it, first walking, and then running quite fast. In a few moments she was taken off her feet altogether and carried along at some distance from the ground. Higher and higher she went, passing over the tops of some tall oak trees, and then right above the church steeple—away across country for miles and miles, till at last they came to the sea. The land disappeared; there was nothing to be seen but sky and sea, with a few ships in the distance, and Meg was wondering what country they would come to next, when the string snapped, and she plunged head first into the waves.

The sudden shock made her faint and giddy for a moment, but she soon recovered, and found herself quietly floating on her back and slowly rising to the surface. As she came to the top of the water she saw that she was right under the bows of a large steamer. There was a rope hanging overboard just within her reach, so Meg promptly caught hold of it, swarmed up it in a very agile manner, and stepped on to the deck of the vessel. There was no one to be seen except the man at the wheel, and, of course, Meg knew she was requested not to speak to him, so she sat down on one of the deck chairs, noticing, to her great surprise, that her hair and clothes were as dry as if she had not been in the water at all.

Before long she heard footsteps approaching, and saw a man coming towards her from the other end of the ship. He wore a fine blue uniform with gold braid, and a peaked cap, on which the word "Co." was embroidered. In his hand he carried a pair of ticket-collector's nippers.

"Ticket, please, miss," he said, touching his cap.

"Ticket!" said Meg, astonished. "I haven't one."

The man looked at her very suspiciously.

"Then I shall have to hand you over to the police," he grumbled, "for attempting to travel without having paid your fare."

"I didn't attempt to travel!" replied Meg angrily.

"Here you are, going along at ninety miles an hour in the Unlimited Lightning Express, and yet you say you're not attempting to travel!"

"I don't understand," said the little girl. "What is the Unlimited Express?"

"This is, of course. Come, let's have no nonsense! Pay up and look pleasant!"

"I'll look pleasant if you wish it, but I have no money."

"Then I shall have to give you in charge when we get to Slapham Junction. Come this way, young woman."

Meg was taken down some steps into the saloon, where she was handed over to the steward, an elderly man, wearing a blue uniform like the ticket-collector's. He was busily engaged in sharpening the points of the compass with a large sheath knife.

"Now, my lass," he asked, "what is your name?"

"Margaret Alexandra Constance Tilbury Stanway."

"Shiver my timbers! Who gave you that name?"

"My godfathers and godmothers," replied Meg, who knew her catechism.

"What is your age, missie?" he asked.

"Ladies don't tell their ages—it's not polite," said Meg.

"All right," said the steward; "I shall put you down as three."

"Three!" said Meg very angrily. "Why, I'm eight years and nine months."

"I thought I should fetch it out of you somehow," chuckled the sailor. "Quarter less nine." He wrote some figures on the



Professor Bossis and Meg.

paper, and then said: "Pass the word for the ship's doctor."

"I don't want to see a doctor, thank you," said Meg.

"It's like this, missie," said the sailor. "When folks gets taken up for breaking rules we has to measure them, so that we knows them again if so be that they runs away. It's a furreign notion, but it's uncommon clever."

At this moment Professor Bossis, the ship's doctor, came into the room. He was a very kind-looking old gentleman, but he had an enormous nose, very red and shiny, which sometimes alarmed his patients until they got used to it.

"Well, my dear," he said, sitting down by Meg, "I'm sorry to see you in this situation."

"I'm not in this situation," said Meg haughtily.

The doctor looked puzzled, and Meg went on: "I'm not in any situation, thank you. I'm not a servant."

"My dear young lady," said the doctor, "you quite misunderstand me. But never mind. Let me measure you, and then I'll see if I can't help you in some way."

"Very well," said Meg, for the old gentleman looked so kind and good-natured that she did not like to refuse him. So he pulled a tape out of his pocket and measured her height, the


THE BOATSWAIN'S CAT

length of her hair, and her girth round the waist. Then he felt her pulse, looked at her tongue, counted her teeth, and took her temperature, making notes of everything in his diary.

"Thank you, my dear," he said, when he had finished. "Now don't you worry yourself. I'll come and say a good word for you at the police court when we get on shore."

Then he turned to the steward and said: "Couldn't you do something to amuse this young lady?"

"Look here, my lass," he said, "I'll sing you a song if you like."

"Please do," said the little girl.

"Comic or sentimental?"

"Something sentimental, if you please."

"Concert pitch or Stockholm tar?"

"Whichever you please."

The steward took off his coat, rolled up his shirt-sleeves, and began to sing, accompanying himself on a fog-horn, which he worked with his foot.

THE BOATSWAIN'S CAT.

'Twas in the Bay of Biscay O;
The gale was on our lee;
The ship was sailing on a wind
(And also on the sea),
When suddenly the skipper heard
A shrill and piercing scream,
And saw his little daughter fall
From off the starboard beam.

He watched her plunge and disappear
Beneath a briny swirl.
He could have spared a dozen buoys,
But not his only girl.
Then as he tore and raved his hair
In accents hoarse and wild,
The boatswain's cat jumped overboard
To save the drowning child.

He clutched the infant's golden hair,
And swam with might and main.
Three times she sank; and thrice he dived,
And fished her up again.
A boat was launched; the child was saved;
The cat, oh! where was he?
Ask of the dog-fish and the sharks—
It's no use asking me.

He lost his life—his lives, I mean;
For every cat has nine—
But still his ghost is sometimes seen
By ships that cross the line.
So if at midnight on the deep
You hear a sad sea-mew,
It is the ghost of the boatswain's cat,
So tender, brave, and true.

"Touching, ain't it?" said the singer, putting on his coat.

"Very touching indeed," said Meg. "Thank you so much."

She did not feel at all inclined to cry over the sad fate of the boatswain's cat, though the doctor was deeply affected. The kind old man was dabbing his eyes with his pocket-handkerchief and furtively removing the moisture from his glasses, while the steward performed the same operation upon his tumbler.

"Would you like an anchor, missie?" he asked.

"Anchor" was his nautical way of pronouncing "Encore," and Meg did not understand what he meant, so she thanked him and declined.

"All right," said the steward, looking rather huffed. "I dare say you can sing better than that yourself. Give us a tune."

"I don't sing," said Meg.

"Can you do drawing-room recitations?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

"I congratulate you," said the doctor.

"Then, what *can* you do?" asked the steward sneeringly.

At this moment an electric bell began to ring loudly overhead, and the Unlimited Express stopped at a landing-stage.

"Slapham Junction! All change here!" said the ticket-collector, putting his head in at the door. "This way, please, miss."

Meg and the doctor followed the ticket-collector up a gangway on to the quay, where the child was at once handed over

to a policeman. Then all four of them went into the police court, which was in the next street.

"Who defends the accused?" asked the magistrate.

"I do, sir," said a tall gentleman to whom the doctor had said a few words.

"Very good," said the magistrate, and the case proceeded. The evidence against Meg was very simple. The collector deposed that she had entered the Unlimited Express without a ticket and had refused to pay her fare when called upon to do so.

"Anything to say?" asked the magistrate.

Up jumped the tall gentleman. He had a very pleasant, good-natured face, and wore an eye-glass tied to his buttonhole with a long piece of red tape.

"My client," he said, "had no intention of entering the Express; she was taken in entirely without her consent."

"That was her own fault," said the ticket-collector. "She might have brought it in with her. There is no extra charge for luggage."

"At any rate, she was trespassing," said the magistrate sharply. "She could not have been taken in unless she was on the line."

"I wasn't," said Meg. "There wasn't any line—there aren't any at sea."

"Nonsense! There have been lines at sea ever since Britannia ruled the waves—lots of lines. There's the Blue Star Line, the Hurry Skurry Line, the line you were trespassing on, and plenty more."

"I didn't know it," said Meg.

"Then you ought to have known; you should have read the advertisements. I must send you to prison for six months with soft labour."

"What is soft labour?" asked the child, turning to Dr. Bossis.

"Mixing gruel," replied the doctor. "Never mind, I'll get you off."

He whispered to the tall gentleman, who smiled knowingly, and said:

"My client has a conscientious objection to being sent to prison."

"H'm!" said the magistrate. "If that is so I can't force her to go. I'll make out a certificate; that will be one-and-three-halfpence."

"My client has a conscientious objection to paying for anything," said the solicitor.

"Very well, then she must have the certificate for nothing. Look sharp, Mr. Clerk! I have to attend a race meeting this afternoon."

The clerk was in a hurry, too; he picked up the first paper he came across, and handed it to Meg. It was a licence to carry coal to Newcastle.

"I shall have to leave you, my dear, for a little while," said the doctor. "My friend, Mr. Vellum, will look after you while I go and see some patients; but we shall meet later on. Good morning."

He hurried away, leaving Meg and the solicitor to find their way out of the court at their leisure.

"I've taken quite a fancy to you, young lady," said the good-natured lawyer. "I'm always taking something—it's a queer habit of mine. Last week I took a chill and an affidavit."

Meg didn't know what an affidavit was, but she thought she would like to try one the next time she caught cold, instead of a horrid mustard plaster.

"Come along," continued her new friend, "and have a look round. The Express doesn't go back till this evening, so there's plenty of time."

They walked through several streets, and presently came to a large and handsome building. The lawyer stopped and asked Meg if she would like to go in. "It is the hospital," he explained, "and some of the patients are rather interesting."

Meg said she would very much like to

go in, so Mr. Vellum rang the bell and asked for the matron, who very soon appeared and politely asked her visitors to walk upstairs. She led the way into a long room full of beds, in which the patients were lying or sitting.

"This is the surgical ward," she said, "and the child in the first bed is the Boy who stood on the Burning Deck. You remember his adventure?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, naturally, his feet got rather badly scorched and he had to come into hospital."

"But I thought no one knew what had become of him."

"We know a great many things here that other people don't," said Mr. Vellum. "It's a wonderful country this—wonderful!"

"What country is it?"

"This is the Land of Co."

"And who is Co?"

"Co? Well, how shall I explain? Let me see. Do you know the name of your mother's grocer?"

"Yes, Smith and Co."

"Exactly. Now, you may have seen Smith, but you've never seen Co, I'll warrant. He lives here, and never goes out of the country, though he is partner of no end of people all over the world."

"Is he a nice man?"

"Nobody knows. He never appears in public except in disguise. You may have met him already without knowing it."

"Perhaps he was the ticket-collector," said Meg.

"Very likely; but never mind him now. Let's look at the patients."

He shook hands with the Boy who stood on the Burning Deck, and asked him how he was getting on.

"Nicely, sir, thank you," answered the Boy.

"I hope it will be a lesson to you not to play with fire in the future. Good day, my lad."

The next bed contained an old man whose legs were covered with wicker cages to keep off the weight of the blankets.

"This," said the matron, "is a poor fellow who was brutally assaulted and thrown down a flight of stairs by a notorious burglar named Goosey Gander—at least, that was his professional name. He was terribly injured—dislocation of the left hip, compound fracture of the left leg, severe contusions, and shock to the system."

Meg asked the patient how he felt. The poor man only groaned.

"A bad case, I'm afraid," said the matron, passing on to the next patient.

"Have you got the Babes in the Wood here?" asked Meg.

"No, I'm sorry to say we have not. They were past help when they were found, so it was no use bringing them here. They wouldn't have come to any harm if it hadn't been for those horrid, officious robins."

"The robins?"

"Yes. You know what the robins did to the Babes, I suppose?"

"They only covered them up with leaves."

"Only! That was just what did the mischief. The leaves came out of a Penny Dreadful, and poisoned the poor children's minds—and they died. We had an inquest, and there was a verdict of 'Death by misadventure,' and the robins were severely censured. The Babes were stuffed and sent to the museum. Perhaps you will see them by-and-by."

Meg was looking at the model of a ship which stood on a bracket fastened to the wall above one of the beds.

"That interests you, I see," said the lawyer. "It was made by poor old Tom

Bowling. He was in hospital here a long time."

"What was the matter with him?"

"Softening of the heart. I thought everybody knew that; it was mentioned by the gentleman who wrote a song about poor Tom. One line says distinctly:

His heart was *something* and soft.

"Try again," said the lawyer.

Meg asked the little maid if she liked being in hospital. The child smiled vacantly at her, and repeated: "We are seven."

"You see," said the matron, "that's all we can ever get out of her. I don't think she'll get any better, but she seems quite happy, poor thing!"



"And sat down beside——
And frightened Miss Muffet awhey."

He could sit up in bed and work, and he carved that ship all out of one block of wood, a ship's log."

They passed into another long room. There were no beds in it, and the patients were sitting or walking about the room. Some of them were reading and working quietly, while others were behaving in a very eccentric manner.

"They don't look very ill," said Meg.

"No, these are only mental cases. Notice this little girl, for instance; she is the picture of health. Just speak to her, and see what she says."

"What is your name, little girl?" asked Meg.

The little girl made a curtsy, smiled sweetly, and said: "We are seven."

In the far corner of the room a little girl was crouching with a look of terror on her white face. Every now and then she would start up and look behind her, shaking her dress and brushing her hand, in which she held a horn spoon, across the back of her head and neck, as if she were trying to dislodge a wasp or something that had tickled her.

"That is a case of Spidrophobia," said the matron.

"I never heard of that disease," said Meg.

"I think you have," suggested the lady, smiling. "You must have read about little Miss Muffet——"

"She sat on a tuffet——"

"Eating her curds and whey——"

"It was a way she had," murmured the lawyer.

The matron looked at him so sternly that the poor man blushed until even his eye-glass turned ruby-red. Then she turned to her other visitor and continued: "There came a great spider——"

"And sat down besider——"

"And frightened Miss Muffet awhey. There! I thought you knew all about it. She never recovered from that fright, and now nothing will persuade her that the insect isn't in the room, waiting to jump out upon her. We have tried all sorts of remedies: galvanism, palmistry, fly-papers, insect powder, hot bottles, cold bottles—everything; but she never gets any better."

"It is supposed," said the lawyer, "that she was not quite right in her mind even before the fright. Did you ever hear of a perfectly sane child sitting on a tuffet? Why, there isn't such a thing, and a child who sits on nothing must be wrong somewhere."

"It must have been a horrid spider, anyway," said Meg.

"It was supposed to have escaped from a travelling menagerie," said the matron. "Some people say it was a learned spider and used to spell words out of Web-ster's Dictionary."

As they passed along the ward a tall, long-haired, and very serious-looking patient came up and asked to be introduced to Meg. The matron presented him as Mr. Vivian D'Otty, poet-in-ordinary to the hospital, and winner of the Hanwell Prize Medal for Blank Verse.

"Welcome, fair damsel," said Mr. D'Otty, "to this verdant abode of the Muses. May I take the opportunity of reciting a short dramatic poem of my own composition?"

"I shall be delighted to hear it," said Meg.

"A thousand-three-hundred-and-forty-five thanks!" And then he rushed out of the ward, and never came back.

In one corner of the room stood a small, fat, puffy-faced boy, sucking his thumb and looking very miserable.

"I seem to know his face," said Meg.

"Yes," said the matron, "I dare say you do. It is little Jack Horner, son of one of the attendants. He's a mischievous, interfering child; he always will have a finger in every pie. He looks as if he had been getting into hot water, as usual. And now I think you have seen everything."

Meg and the lawyer thanked the good lady for her kindness, signed their names in the visitors' book, and left the hospital just as a poor fellow was carried in terribly cut up by the refusal of a young lady to whom he had offered his hand and heart.

Just outside the hospital gates Meg found Dr. Bossis waiting for her. He had changed his clothes, and was wearing knee-breeches, silk stockings, elegant shoes, and a broad-brimmed black hat. Altogether, he looked very smart. It suddenly occurred to Meg to ask the two gentlemen if they could tell her the answer to Tom's riddle, so she turned to Mr. Vellum, and said:

"Would you mind informing me why a miller wears a white hat?"

"Does he wear a white hat?" asked the lawyer.

"I suppose so."

"Come, come," said the lawyer sharply, "that won't do, you know. You must answer my question—yes or no. Now then, does he wear a white hat?"

"I've heard that he does."

"I can't take hearsay as evidence," said Mr. Vellum. "If you can't prove that the miller wears a white hat I can't possibly tell you why he does so."

"Perhaps you can tell me, Dr. Bossis?"

"I'm sorry to disoblige you," answered the doctor, "but it is not etiquette for me



"Just as if she had been an air-ball."

to tell professional secrets. Besides, I don't happen to know."

"I'll bid you good day," said the lawyer. "If ever you want me you'll find me in Pump Court."

"Pump Court!" said Meg. "What a curious name!"

"It's the place where we examine witnesses," said the lawyer over his shoulder as he walked away.

"Do you care to walk round and see the sights?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, please."

"Come along then. Would you like a nice pill or a dose of medicine before you start? Try one of my aerial lozenges!"

"What are they for?"

"They remove all sorts of heaviness and depression, and make you feel as light as a feather. They are very nice, too."

He gave Meg a lozenge, which tasted rather like strawberry jam, and instantly made her feel so light and buoyant that she could hardly keep her feet on the pavement. The doctor took her hand and stepped out gaily, towing her behind him right off the ground, just as if she had been an air-ball.

They stopped at the doors of a large building, the front of which was covered with gaily-coloured posters. There were pictures of clowns, and people jumping through hoops from bare-backed horses, and elephants, and performing monkeys, and under each of these were the words in large letters:

THE CIRCUS OF JUSTICE.

The most amusing Entertainment in the Town.

SENTENCES PRONOUNCED AND EXECUTED WHILE YOU WAIT!

MR. JUSTICE JABB! PROFESSOR PHEMYNIN! FUNNY FRED!

Prices from sixpence to two guineas.



"A long procession marched in."

Dr Bossis paid at the ticket office and led the way to the reserved seats. The inside of the building was very like Hengler's Circus. There was a tan ring, and a band over the performers' entrance, and rows of seats for the spectators; but there were some things that one does not usually find in a circus. There was a prisoners' dock in the middle of the ring, and a jury-box, and another queer little box for the judge, in front of which was a tall, white post with a red disk on it. All these were empty, but in a few minutes the band began to play very loudly—especially the big drummer; the curtains of the stage entrance were drawn back, and a long procession marched in. First of all came a row of comical pantomime policemen, very fat and red in the nose, followed by the ring-master, a magnificent personage in a huge shirt-front and a long whip. Of course, he had on some other clothes as well, but the front and the whip were so gorgeous and fascinating that one hardly noticed the other things. After him came a lot of horses and ponies, led by grooms or ridden by ladies in short skirts and gentlemen in bathing costumes. Professor Phemynin sat on the tail of one large blue and yellow horse, and was spinning a lot of plates and basins on the rest of the animal's back and neck. Then came the jury, two and two, headed by a tall, thin, clean-shaven gentleman, with a violin sticking out of his coat pocket, and a pretty little girl carrying something like a doll in her arms. Meg stared at her for a moment, and then exclaimed: "Why, it's Alice in Wonderland!"

It was, indeed, dear old Alice, nursing the White Queen like a baby. She smiled and nodded to Meg, put one finger on her lips, and said:

"Hush! Please don't wake the Queen whatever you do! I've only just got her to sleep with a deposing draught made out of hair-restorer and pepper, and she is so fractious when she wakes."

The faces of the rest of the jury seemed very familiar to Meg, and when she looked at them more closely she found that she knew nearly every one. She saw Sylvie and Bruno, Uncle Tom, Little Lord Fauntleroy and his noble grandfather, who, as usual, was knitting his brows with two pairs of bright needles, Baron Munchausen, Fritz, Swiss-Family-Robinson, Helen's Babies, and one or two others. She did not know the gentleman who was walking with Alice, so she asked Dr. Bossis who he was.

"That," said the doctor, "is the celebrated detective, Mr. Sherlock Holmes. We always have him on the jury, because he is so clever at finding out things."

The procession marched round the ring. After the jury came some acrobatic barristers (who perform on the horizontal bar), and then a black omnibus without any windows, driven by Funny Fred, the clown.

"What a funny 'bus!" exclaimed Meg.

"It is the prison van," said the doctor. "The prisoners are inside, and that is the judge, Mr. Justice Jabb, sitting on the roof."

Sure enough, there was a very large wig with a little lean man inside it squatting cross-legged on the top of the vehicle—for there were no outside seats. He looked very pleased with himself, and bowed and smiled right and left. A huge elephant, ridden by a costermonger, walked behind the prison van, and his tail was the tail of the procession. The band stopped playing and the performers halted.

"Who is that coster?" asked Meg.

"He is the gentleman who looks after the costs; he has plenty of work to do sometimes."

The man they were discussing gave the elephant a kick, and said something in an Eastern dialect which sounded like

"Shiftheb loom Inbloke." The sagacious animal thereupon stretched out his trunk, gently lifted the judge from his seat, and dropped him cleverly into the judicial box. The jury took their places; two of the prisoners, a little boy and a little girl, were placed in the dock; the clown knocked down the whole row of policemen; the ring-master helped the barristers on to their bars with his whip, and most of the other performers marched out till they were wanted.

"Silence in the Court!" shouted the elephant, in a voice which shook the whole building. Everybody sat quite still, and the place became suddenly so quiet that one might have heard a rolling-pin fall. Then the clerk read the charge against the prisoners, John and Margery Daw, whom he accused of having "wilfully, maliciously, and of malice aforethought conspired to deface, mutilate, and otherwise disfigure certain story-books, the property of the aforesaid John and Margery Daw; viz., that is to say, by tearing and crumpling sundry pages of the aforesaid books, injuring the bindings, and turning down the leaves in dogs' ears."

While the clerk was reading, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who had elected himself foreman of the jury, sat with his eyes shut and a blissful smile on his face, playing exquisite melodies on his violin with one hand, while with the other he injected a strong solution of prussic acid into the back of his neck.

"I appear for the prosecution, my lord," said one of the barristers, who was swinging on a trapeze somewhere up in the roof.

"Very well, Mr. Quick," said the judge. "But we don't come here to trust in appearances, you know. We want facts."

"Oh, my!" said the clown. "I can tell you a fact."

"Well?" said the judge.

"Queen Anne's dead," said Funny Fred.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Justice Jabb, turning to the jury. "You'll make a note of that, ladies and gentlemen, if you please."

"I can tell you another fact," said Mr. Sherlock Holmes. "The male prisoner's father is a confectioner."

"Bless my wig!" said the judge. "How do you know that?"

"I don't know it," said the foreman haughtily. "I deduce it. That boy has been eating peppermints—I can perceive the odour even at this distance, and the inference is obvious."

"Very ably reasoned," said the judge. "Prisoner at the bar, is your father a confectioner?"

"Please, sir, no sir," answered the boy.

"Then he ought to be," grumbled Mr. Holmes, looking rather annoyed, and the judge asked who defended the accused.

"I do, my lord," said another barrister, who had been turning legal somersaults round the ring. "I plead guilty."

"John and Margery Daw," said the judge, "you have pleaded guilty to a very shocking offence, and the sentence of this court is that you shall be treated as you have treated your poor, harmless books. You will be dogs'-eared for the space of twenty-four calendar hours. Call the executioner-magician."

The band played "Old Dog Tray," and Professor Phemynin stepped into the ring, not looking a bit like an executioner or a magician; he wore evening dress and half-mourning hair (black, streaked with grey), and as he walked in he turned up the cuffs of his coat to show that he had nothing concealed in his sleeves. He bowed to the judge, and produced a plateful of new-laid eggs from his lordship's chin and a large sheet from a policeman's elbow. He threw the sheet over the prisoners in the dock, so that they were completely hidden; then he waved his wand,



The Circus of Justice.

said "Hey, presto! Pass!" and lifted the sheet.

It was wonderful! In that half minute the sentence had been carried out. When Meg looked for the prisoners she saw a comical pair of figures. The children's ears had grown very large and pointed, like a dog's, and flapped about their heads with the tips crumpled and torn. The boy's jacket turned up like a stumpy tail, but he was much too miserable to wag it; indeed, he was blubbering and howling, with a queer sort of yelp in his voice, looking for all the world like a naughty puppy that had been well slapped for getting into mischief. The little girl rather resembled a Pomeranian; the coat she wore had suddenly broken out into a mass of white hair, and she had a fine curly tail.

"Poor children!" said Meg; "I feel quite sorry for them!"

"It is better to be dog's-eared than to go to the dogs altogether," said the doctor. "They will be all right again to-morrow, and this severe lesson ought to cure them of their bad habits."

The prisoners were led out, looking very unhappy, with their funny little tails between their legs, and the elephant trumpeted "Silence in Court!"

"Silence in the elephant!" shouted Funny Fred, and everybody laughed.

The clown walked up to the ring-master and shook hands with him very cordially.

"Well, Mr. Fred," said that gentleman, haughtily turning up his nose, "what can I do for you?"

"I want to see you dance, Mr. Prettyman," said the clown.

"Then I'm afraid I can't oblige you; I never learnt dancing."

"I can teach you in half a minute," said Fred, winking at the judge.

"Indeed?" said the ring-master. "You must be very clever then."

"It's all done by kindness," said the clown, treading heavily on Mr. Prettyman's favourite corn.

The poor man jumped a foot or two in the air and went dancing round on one leg, making awful grimaces, while the clown clapped his hands and shouted: "Bravo! Encore! Well danced, Mr. Prettyman!"

"Next lot!" cried Mr Justice Jabb, and an elderly and very rotund man was placed in the dock and charged with having written and published an offensive and useless book, "Riggle's Arithmetic," to wit, whereby a large amount of suffering had been inflicted on a number of children.

"Now," said the judge, "what do you mean by persecuting young people with your abominable arithmetic?"

"I contend, my lord," said Riggle, "that my book contains a great deal of useful information and instruction."

"I can't find any information in it," said the judge—"nothing but a lot of stupid questions that nobody wants to answer. Here's a silly sum about a bath that fills itself in ten minutes and empties itself in four minutes and a-half. Then you ask how long it will take to empty itself if the tap is left running. Now, that is a distinct inducement to children to play with water and get themselves in a mess."

"But, my lord——"

"Silence! The book is full of misleading suggestions. For instance, you say, 'A boy buys forty eggs for a shilling,' which is absurd; eggs are generally a penny each—never less than a halfpenny. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, what is your verdict?"

The jury could not agree.

"Very well," said the judge. "Prisoner at the bar, we shall ask you an arithmetical problem, and if you cannot answer it at once you will go to prison until you do. Will one of the jury set a sum?"

Sylvie stood up promptly and said, "I will."

"Thank you. Give the prisoner a slate and a pencil, and let him take down the question. Now, Miss Sylvie, if you please."

"It is a rule-of-three sum," said Sylvie.

"I can do that in my head," said the prisoner, smiling.

"Did I understand you to say you could do it on your head?" asked Mr. Justice Jabb sternly.

"I said, '*in* my head,' my lord."

"Lucky for you!" said the judge. "I don't allow people to use slang expressions here; it's contempt of court. Let us hear the sum."

"If twenty men," said Sylvie, "can move a hundred and forty cartloads of bricks a distance of five miles in six days how many cartloads of men can move ten miles of brick in twenty days?"

Mr. Riggle looked utterly flabbergasted.

"My lord," he said, "it is quite impossible for me to answer that question."

"Then go to prison till you do," said the judge. "Take him away and tell the jailor to feed him on decimals for a week."

At these terrible words the prisoner fainted and fell on the floor of the dock. Funny Fred rolled him about on the tan until he came round again, and then trundled him off like an empty beer barrel.

The next prisoner, a conceited-looking youth, was very soon convicted of having disfigured library books by underlining words and paragraphs in ink, and writing his silly remarks and opinions in the margins. As he was so fond of playing with pen and ink the Professor kindly changed him into a porcupine, and there he stood, bristling with quills, and weeping tears of ink and remorse upon one of the ill-used volumes.

Then two fat, stuffy children, brother and sister, were charged with reading at meal times, owing to which evil habit their books were full of crumbs and currants and grease marks and spots of gravy and sticky patches of jam. When the books were produced in court they were in such a dreadful condition that the jury at once returned a verdict of "Guilty," with a recommendation to severity.

"Prisoners," said the judge, "it is quite clear that, in your present state, you are incapable of keeping your books clean. You will, therefore, be changed into ant-eaters, which, as you know, eat nothing but ants. There will be no excuse then for making crumbs or gravy splashes. You will also remain in the circus menagerie until you have cleaned the books which you have already soiled."

It did not take the magician long to turn the children into ant-eaters—funny-looking little animals, as you see in the picture, with long snouts and tongues, and great bushy tails. They were given a book each to clean, and while one licked off the squashed currants and jam and grease spots with his tongue, the other brushed the crumbs and salt from the pages of the second book with her tail, which was admirably adapted for that purpose.

The audience applauded loudly. The ant-eaters shut the books, jumped through a few hoops, and ran off in charge of a policeman.

Sophia Maria Gooddy, spinster, was then charged with uttering false and malicious libels about certain books for children, and pleaded "Not guilty." She was a prim, elderly, sour-faced person, looking as if she had never been young or wanted to be.

She was constantly making sneering remarks, said Mr. Stuffle, Q.C., counsel for the prosecution, about every book that was not either intensely moral or highly instructive. She was particularly averse to fairy stories of all sorts, which

she called "Bosh," "Twaddle," "Nonsense," and other polite names, declaring that the authors of such works ought to be sent to penal servitude. Counsel did not call any witnesses, but produced a long letter in prisoner's handwriting, which he read, as follows:

"Colenso Villa,

"Hannah Moor,

"Molesworth,

"Dec. 23, 1895.

"My dear Niece and Godchild Sophia,—As it is usual at this season to send presents to one's relations, although I do not entirely approve of the practice, I enclose two small books, which you will find very improving if you read them carefully and ponder thoughtfully over their contents. The first is entitled "George's Holiday," and describes a boy's visit to the Archæological Section of the British Museum, with an account of the interesting objects he saw there and the comments of his tutor. The other work, written by the Rev. Samuel Sawdust, is 'Virtuous Valentine; or, The Crossing-sweeper's Christmas Crumpet.' How much nobler and more refined, my dear Sophia, are these volumes than those *trashy* and improper books which so many thoughtless parents place in the hands of their innocent offspring! I trust that you have *never* opened one of those obnoxious publications which, under the name of fairy-tales, are so common (and vulgar) nowadays. It was my misfortune last week to meet with a ridiculous, inconsequent, uninstructive piece of folly called 'Alice in Wonderland.' Of the total want of all serious purpose in this *witless* production I need not speak, but I must refer to one passage which is *most* improper and disgraceful, inciting people, as it does, to gross acts of cruelty. Here is the passage:

Speak roughly to your little boy
And beat him when he sneezes:
He only does it to annoy,
Because he knows it teases.

It is positively *criminal!*

"Now, my dear Sophia, I must bid you good-bye, trusting that your studies in Algebra and Higher Geography are progressing satisfactorily. That you may never encounter the *poisonous* volume above referred to, or any other similar works, is the constant prayer of

"Your affectionate aunt and godmother,

"SOPHIA MARIA GOODDY."

"And how old, ladies and gentlemen of the jury," continued Mr. Stuffle, "do you think this child was—this child who, much against her will, no doubt, was studying Algebra and Higher Geography?"

He paused impressively; then, in a voice choked with emotion, he added:

"She was not quite eight years old!"

Counsel buried his face in his brief-bag, and sobbed violently, while the circus rang with applause.

"Brother Stuffle," said the judge, "you brought down the house that time. You must really oblige again—everybody wants an encore."

Mr. Stuffle dried his eyes and began again at "Now, my dear Sophia, I must bid you good-bye," sobbing more violently than ever at the finish. Indeed, he was so overcome that the elephant had to squirt cold water down the back of his neck before he could proceed with his speech.

Meg expected to see the case finished at once; but, as counsel for the defence announced his intention of calling sixteen witnesses, she told the doctor she had seen enough, and left the circus leaning on his arm.

"The circus was dreadfully hot," said Meg. "Can't we go and sit somewhere and get cool?"

"Certainly, my dear," said the doctor. "Come along into the park."

They turned down a side street, and very soon found themselves in a large garden, where there were broad walks, and trees with seats under them, and gay flower-beds.

"It's no use smelling those things," said the doctor, as Meg put her nose into a pink rosebud. "They are all artificial."

"What a pity! Why don't they have real ones?"

"They used to once upon a time, but his Majesty the Emperor, who is very fond of driving in the park, was once stung by a bee, so he had all the real flowers taken away, and, of course, the bees don't care to come here."

"I think," said Meg, "it would have been much nicer if he had kept the real flowers and had artificial bees instead, with no stings."

"A very good idea," said the doctor. "I wonder he never thought of it. Let us sit down."

They had been seated about a minute, when a young man dressed in very fine clothes came slowly down the path. He wore a crimson cloak over the uniform of a field admiral, with silver spurs and a sword, and on one side of his head was just half of a gold crown.

"The Half-Crown Prince!" exclaimed Dr. Bossis.

"What an extraordinary title!" said Meg.

"Yes; you see, he ought to have been Crown Prince, but he has a twin brother, so we have two Half-Crown Princes instead."

As the young man approached the doctor rose and took off his hat, while Meg dropped a graceful curtsy. The Prince kindly picked it up and returned it to her with a gracious smile.

"Honi soit qui mal y pense," he murmured.

"The same to you, sir, and many of them," replied Meg, who did not understand Italian.

"Dr. Bossis, I believe?" said the Prince, turning to her companion.

"At your Royal Half-Highness's service," replied the doctor, bowing low.

"I want you to prescribe for me," said the Prince. He looked terribly hot and tired and worried, and sank wearily down on to the seat.

"With pleasure, Prince," said the doctor. "I have a new line in pills just now that I can highly recommend. Or what do you say to a nice black draught with the chill off?"

"No, no; I don't require anything of that sort. I just want you to prescribe me a complete rest for two or three months—as much as you can for a guinea. I haven't more than that to spare; my expenses are perfectly awful."

"H'm!" said the doctor. "My usual fee is a guinea for the first two months, and half-a-guinea for every six weeks after that."

"Very well, I'll take a guinea's worth. I'm thoroughly worn out with laying foundation stones, and opening hospitals, and attending charity bazaars, and all that sort of thing. I never get a moment's peace."

"I thought it was so jolly to be a prince," remarked Meg.

"My dear young lady, you know nothing about it. Look at me! I went to bed at four o'clock this morning, after a court ball; got up again at seven; inspected a cavalry regiment at nine; had my photograph taken from ten till twelve; lunched with the Society for the Suppression of Scorchers, and then laid the foundation stone of a new battleship. Such nonsense! They gave me a stupid silver trowel, and broke a bottle of good wine over the ship. Now, if they'd broken the trowel and given me the bottle of wine, I shouldn't have minded so much. They're always giving me trowels! I've

got fifty at home; I use them as fish-carvers, and boot-scrapers, and cheese-scoops, and I keep a lot in my bedroom to throw at the cats. I wonder what I did with that last one? Oh, by Jove! I'm sitting on the beastly thing. I thought this seat was uncommonly hard."

He took a trowel out of his coat-tail pocket, and looked at it contemptuously. Then he suddenly jumped up and ran towards a large holly bush that grew some few yards from the seat. A man with a camera bolted from this prickly hiding-place, and ran away as fast as he could. The Prince followed him for some distance, then stopped, and threw the trowel at the retreating figure with such precision that the point buried itself deeply in the fugitive's neck, causing him to squeal like a rabbit.



The Half-Crown Prince.

"I thought I heard one of those nasty, sneaking photographers prowling about," said the Prince as he returned, panting, to his seat. "Wherever I go there's always a brute with a camera waiting to get a snap-shot at me. My nerves are completely shattered by the constant strain. Fan me, doctor, there's a good fellow! I feel quite faint."

The doctor took off his broad-brimmed hat and fanned the Prince vigorously.

"Thanks," said the young man. "I think I have a brandy flask on me somewhere. Here, what's this bulging in my breast pocket? Hang it all! It's another trowel!"

"That's a very dangerous place to carry a trowel," said the doctor. "If you had fallen down by any chance you might have been seriously injured."

"Mortarly wounded," suggested Meg.

"Eh?" exclaimed the Prince, sitting up quite briskly. "Would you mind saying that again? Ah, yes; not at all bad! I might work it into one of my public speeches. I'll make a note of it."

He took a pencil from his pocket and scribbled on his shirt cuff.

"Bother it!" he said. "I should have forgotten all about that if I hadn't looked at my cuff and seen the memorandum. I have to distribute medals to seventy-five school children at four o'clock. It's an awful nuisance. I have to say something to each of them, and I can never think of anything appropriate. I wish somebody would write a book of ready-made speeches for public characters. Look here, you might come with me and give me a hint or two. Do you mind?"

When the first child came up the Prince handed it a medal, smiled sweetly, and said, "I have much pleasure in presenting you with this medal."

"Princes are always having to medal with other people's business," whispered Meg.

His Royal Half-Highness gave her an admiring look, made another note on his shirt cuff, and went on with the distribution.

Some of the children made bows or curtsies, and some only fell up the steps. Some said "Thank you," but most of them only stared at the Prince, and looked very shy and awkward. None of them seemed to know what to do with the medals when they had got them. One rude boy bit his to see if it was a good one. Another tried to eat his, and nearly choked himself.

When about fifty children had been up the Prince began to get very sleepy and muddled. Meg heard him saying: "I have much medal in presenting you with this pleasure," and "I have much measure in presenting you with this pedal"; but the children didn't seem to notice the difference a bit. They took their prizes and went back to their places, where they stood staring at the bright discs so intently that many of them hypnotized themselves. They fell down and went fast asleep, and, as nobody knew how to wake them they had to be taken home in wheelbarrows, water-carts, and anything that was handy. The gardener who swept up the place next morning found forty-seven medals lying on the grass, which he took home and used for keeping the birds away from the cherries, so they were *some* good to somebody after all.

When the presentation was over, the children who had not gone to sleep sang another song composed by their teacher. This talented gentleman stood on a chair and beat time; the time beat the children altogether, though they struggled with it gamely, so the conductor finished first, and the poor little singers were nowhere.

At the end of the first verse the Prince beckoned to Meg and the doctor, and they all three slipped quietly away.

"Thank goodness that's over!" said the Prince. "Now you see what public characters have to put up with.

"Hullo! Here comes Professor Phemynin! Good business!"

He went forward to meet the magician, who respectfully took off his hat and produced therefrom six glass bowls of water with canaries swimming about in them, a quantity of lighted paper lanterns, a Welsh Rabbit, and a cannon ball.

"Professor," said Meg, "you are a very clever man, I am sure. Can you tell me why a miller wears a white hat?"

"I'm not afraid," said the magician. "That isn't much in my line. If you'll bring me the miller I'll change his white hat into a blue one or a pink one, or any colour you name; but I can't answer

riddles. See, here comes Mr. Sherlock Holmes; he can tell you, no doubt."

Holmes came down the street at a great pace. He was so deeply absorbed in a delicate chemical experiment which he was performing with a test-tube and a galvanic battery as he walked along, that he nearly ran into Meg.

"I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed, stopping suddenly.

"Mr. Holmes," said the little girl, "can you tell me why a miller wears a white hat?"

Holmes stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"What a beautiful animal is the horse!" he said abstractedly. "And with what forethought has Nature made the creature long and narrow, so that it fits perfectly into the shafts of any vehicle!"

"But what about the hat?" asked Meg.

"The hat!" cried Holmes, resuming his usual manner. "Show me the hat and I will tell you all about the owner—his age, height, appearance, previous history, and mental peculiarities."

"I haven't got the hat," said Meg. "I only want to know why he wears it."

"Then why don't you ask him?"

"I don't know who he is, or where he lives."

"Young lady," said the detective, "I perceive that you are trying to be facetious at my expense. If you have any problem worth my attention I shall be happy to solve it; otherwise——"

"I'll give you a problem," said the Prince. "Find out what has become of the man who was in that cab five minutes ago."

"And I will pay you £100 if you can find him before Friday," added the conjurer.

"Excellent!" said Holmes, putting the tips of his long fingers together and shutting his eyes. "Tell me the facts, please."

The Prince explained how the man had disappeared.

"Very good," said Holmes. "I will now examine the cab."

He entered the vehicle, and crawled about the floor on his hands and knees, with his nose on the mat and a microscope fixed in one eye. After that he minutely examined the horse and the outside of the cab; then he went inside again, and presently came out with a small quantity of tobacco ash, a book, two hairpins, and a shirt-button.

"Now, Mr. George Barnwell," he said to the cabman, "I shall——"

"Blow me tight!" exclaimed the driver. "How did you know my name was Barnwell?"

"I deduced it," said Holmes, smiling.

"Well, it isn't anyhow," said the cabman.

"Nonsense!" said the detective. "I found a volume of poetry in the cab with the name written on the fly-leaf."

"It ain't mine," replied the man. "Someone must have left it behind. They are always leaving things. My name happens to be Lasher."

"Then why didn't you say so before?" asked Holmes, with some warmth.

"You never asked me," said the man.

Holmes was silent for a minute; then he said sharply:

"Lasher, I want to ask you a question. Have you ever demanded more than your legal fare?"

Lasher trembled and turned pale. "Great Jehu's Ghost!" he exclaimed. "How did you know that? Yes, sir, I'm afraid I did *once*, afore I knew any better."

"Ha!" chuckled Holmes. "That was a long shot of mine."

"Well?" said the Prince. "Have you a clue?"

"I have nineteen clues," answered Holmes, "and twenty-four theories which will account for the disappearance. All that remains now is to find out which is the right one."

"But suppose they're all wrong?" suggested the Professor.

"Wrong!" cried Holmes angrily. "I beg to state that I am not one of those stupid story-book detectives who sometimes make a mistake. I am *never* at fault."

"What are you going to do next?" asked Meg.

"You must excuse my answering that question," said Holmes. "I used to explain my methods to that idiot Watson, and he went and gave me away in one of the magazines. So much for friendship! Pah!"

"I must be off," said the Prince. "You'll come with me, young lady, and be presented at Court, I hope—and you, too, doctor?"

"Thanks," said Meg. "I should like to. Shall we take this cab?"

"No," said the Prince, "the cab shall take us. Jump in."

The three friends took their seats and drove away. Holmes, who hated walking, whistled for another cab; then, as none appeared, he pinned his name and address to his waistcoat, and had one of his celebrated sham fits on the pavement, whence he was taken home by the police in an ambulance, free of charge.

As they drove along the Prince gave Meg a few hints about the court she was going to visit.

"My father, King Zero," he explained, "is rather eccentric. Ever since he was stung by that bee in the park, he has taken a dislike to anything natural, and *will* have everything about him as artificial as possible. Don't be surprised at anything you see or anything he may say to you. He is rather awkward to get on with."

"His temper is somewhat uncertain, perhaps?" suggested the doctor.

"Not at all; it is quite certain to be very bad—it always is. I shall present you, my child, as a young lady with an artificial smile, because he doesn't much like receiving people unless there's something unreal about them. Now, whatever you do, try not to be natural."

The cab stopped at the palace gates, and they alighted.

"Doctor," said the Prince, "do you mind paying the cabman? It's not etiquette for me to deal with that sort of person."

"Not at all," said the doctor; but he looked as if he minded a good deal.

A clockwork sentry was marching up and down before the entrance, and saluted stiffly when the Prince put a penny into his slot. Something had evidently gone wrong with his works, for he kept on saluting when once he was started, and then marched straight across the road and walked clean through the window of a tobacconist's shop. They did not wait to see what became of him, but went at once into the throne room.

It was a long and spacious apartment, blazing with artificial lights, though the sun still shone brightly outside, and decorated with artificial flowers and plants. Mechanical birds sang in golden cages, and a clockwork mouse ran across the floor just as Meg came in, and nearly made her scream out loud. There were a few cats and dogs lying about; but they did not move, and the child soon saw that they were stuffed. King Zero was seated on his throne at one end of the room in a very unnatural attitude, with his feet on an unnatural footstool, holding his sceptre stiffly in his right hand. Round him were grouped the courtiers. Some of them had artificial limbs, but most of them were fairly ordinary-looking people.

"They have all false hair or artificial teeth or hand-painted complexions," whispered the Prince. "Now grin."

"Who's this?" asked the king gruffly as they approached.



King Zero.

"A young lady with an artificial smile who wishes to be presented to your Majesty," said the Prince.

"Wumph!" growled the King.

The Prince took Meg's hand, and led her to the foot of the throne; then he said absently: "I have much pleasure in presenting you with this medal."

"You're a fool!" said the King graciously.

Meg knelt at the throne, grinning her hardest, and kissed the end of the sceptre, which the King rudely held under her nose.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Meg," said the little girl.

"Nutmeg?" said the King.

"No, plain Meg."

"Well, Plain Meg, how are you?"

"I'm very well, thank you; but my name is not Plain Meg.

"What is it then?"

"Margaret Alexandra Constance Tilbury Stanway."

"Have you taken out a licence for all those names? If not, you'd better do so at once. People with more than two names are taxed in this country just the same as dogs, and dromedaries, and tobacco, and twins. Well, what do you think of us?"

"Nothing," said Meg, with great presence of mind.

"Hey? What? Nothing?" said the

King, looking very angry. "What d'ye mean?"

"It's too natural to think," said Meg. "I never do it."

"Um!" said King Zero, rather more graciously. "That'll do. Where's our fool?"

Meg retired, and the court jester came forward very unwillingly. He was an uncommonly ugly youth, with a very large head. He wore a cap with bells, a wide frill round his neck, a flaming red court suit, frilled breeches, yellow stockings, and green shoes with blue rosettes.

"Now suggest something to do. We are bored."

"Let us play 'Old Maid,'" said Ninni, "and the Old Maid shall be Aunt Sally, and we'll shy sticks at her."

"That'll do," said the King. "Come on. Shut the doors."

The doors were locked, so that nobody could escape, and the whole court sat down at three large card tables. Meg was commanded to take a place next to the King, on whose other side sat an old lady in a very obvious wig. She had a very small head, and a long, thin nose like a spout; her figure was like a fat sausage tied in the middle. Altogether she had very much the appearance of a seltzogene.

The three games began, and very carefully did the players look after their cards, for, of course, nobody wanted to be turned into an Aunt Sally. As for the King, he behaved abominably; he cheated all the time, looked over other people's hands, and said the rudest things when he didn't get just the card he wanted. The seltzogene lady very soon got rid of her cards, and was out of danger, which made the King so angry that he called her "Old Cat," "She-scorpion," "Pink-eyed Pantechnicon," and all the most horrid names he could think of.

When the game ended, poor Meg was left Old Maid. Those who had lost at the other tables joined her, and the three unlucky ones began playing to see who should be Aunt Sally. The others stood round them in a ring, watching the play with great interest. The King got very excited, and kept on offering to bet on the result; but nobody would have anything to do with him, because it was not etiquette for him to pay when he lost.

The other two who played against Meg were the Prime Minister, a crusty-looking old gentleman, and a gorgeously-dressed lady, who turned out to be the Mistress of the Robes, and who very soon got rid of all her cards. Poor Meg was in a dreadful state of mind, but she stuck bravely to the game, and at last just managed to beat the Prime Minister, who was declared Aunt Sally, amid loud clapping of hands, for he was very unpopular.

The unlucky man was made to stand at one end of the room, with an old bonnet on his head, a short red cloak over his shoulders, and a clay pipe in his mouth. The others were provided with short sticks, with which they were supposed to aim at the pipe; but, as they did not dare to beat the King, most of their shots went very wide of the mark, and the poor Aunt Sally got only a few blows from his Majesty—even *he* couldn't hit the pipe for a long time.

Meg was too good-natured to throw any sticks; she soon got tired of watching the game, and made herself cosy on a couch at the other end of the room. She had hardly settled down when the Prince came up, took a seat beside her, and began, in a rather constrained voice:

"Young lady, I have something very serious to say to you. The time has come when I can no longer conceal the state of my affections. I love you truly. Will you marry me?"

"Marry you! Good gracious! What an idea!" exclaimed Meg.

"In this country everybody who makes a proposal is bound to do so in a certain form of words composed by the Poet

Laureate. It really saves an awful lot of trouble, because fellows never know what to say when they want to put the question. Well, will you marry me?"

"Of course, I won't! I'm much too young."

"Is your decision final?"

"Certainly."

"And will you be a sister to me?"

"Is that part of the formula?" asked Meg.

"Yes," said the Prince, "it is. I don't want you to be a sister to me, you know."

"Very well, then," said Meg; "I won't."

The Prince sighed and rose from his seat.

"You needn't go away," said the child. "We can still be good friends. Stay here and talk to me."

"I must leave you for ten minutes," said the Prince. "It's part of the formula, you know; but I'll come back again."

He had hardly left her, when the court jester approached, took off his cap, threw himself on one knee at Meg's feet, put one hand on his heart, and began:

"I have something very serious to say to you."

"Good gracious!" cried the child. "Here's another!"

"The time has come when I can no longer conceal the state of my affections."

"I won't even be a sister to you—so there!"

The jester put on a most melancholy expression.

"And now you can go away for ten minutes," continued the little girl. "Good afternoon."

Ninni rose to his feet, and walked slowly away, casting many a backward glance over his shoulder as he went; for Meg looked very sweet and bewitching indeed, with her long, silky, dark hair and pretty frock and dainty shoes.

As the jester retired a telegraph boy came into the room, stared at the people for a few minutes, and then walked across to Meg.

"I hope he's not going to propose to me," thought the child.

"A telegram for you, miss," said the boy, handing her an orange-coloured envelope.

It was addressed to:

"The beautiful young lady with brown hair and blue eyes."

Meg opened it, and found inside this very long message written on several sheets of paper:

"Adorable Miss,—I have the honour to send you my latest poem, entitled 'The Toad-in-the-Hole.' It would have been longer if it had not been so short. I hope you will read it when you have time, and that you will have a good time when you read it.—Your obedient poet,

"ARCHIBALD F. D'OTTY."

Then followed these very beautiful and touching verses:

THE TOAD-IN-THE-HOLE.

The toad-in-the-hole looked out one day,
And gazed on the world around.
He looked in a patronising way,
With dignity most profound.
A pig in a poke went flaunting past—
A bee in her bonnet sat.
"What a queer old soul!" said the toad-in-the-hole.
"Thank goodness I'm not like that!"

A dog in a manger gave a growl
And frightened a vain young jay
In peacock's feathers. A fat, boiled owl
Drove off on a dinner tray.
The goose with the golden eggs began
To quackle and flap her wings;
The cow with the iron tail went by.
"Poor things!" said the toad. "Poor things!"

Meanwhile, a bull in a china shop
Was making a dreadful din;
When over the hedge there chanced to pop
An ass in a lion's skin.



"Threw himself on one knee at Meg's feet, put one hand to his heart, and began."

A wolf in a dead sheep's clothing chaffed
A bear with a sore, sore head.
"Uncommonly droll!" said the toad-in-the-hole.
"They *are* a rum lot!" he said.

The bird in the hand (who caught the worm)
Flew down to assist its mate,
A dying duck in a thunderstorm,
Who seemed in a hopeless state.
A snake in the grass, who thought her waist
Was getting a trifle slim,
Crept over the road, and swallowed the toad—
So that was the end of him.

"There's fifteen-and-ninepence to pay on this," said the boy, when Meg had finished reading.

"I can't help it," said Meg. "I've no money."

"I must have the money somehow," said the boy, "or I shall get into a dreadful row."

"Then you can keep it yourself," cried Meg, running away.

"What do you say to tea and shrimps on the sands?" asked the doctor when Meg rejoined him.

"That will be lovely!" she said.

They left the palace gardens by the nearest gate, and went out by a side door, which led them straight on to the sands. A little way off, under the shelter of a high cliff, was a wooden refreshment-room in front of which several chairs and small tables were set out. Towards these they made their way, and joined Professor Phemynin, who sat smoking a cigarette, idly blowing smoke rings and changing them into air bubbles as they came out of his mouth and floated away.

When the doctor had ordered tea Meg was greatly interested and surprised by the clever way in which the shrimps were prepared for table. The proprietor of the rooms put them—the shrimps, not

the rooms—all alive and kicking in a wire ladle over a large pan of boiling water. Then he blew out a paper bag, and burst it between his hands with a loud bang. The noise made Meg blink, and as for the shrimps, they were so startled that they lost their heads and jumped clean out of their skins with fright, and fell into the boiling water, so that when they were cooked they were all ready peeled, which saved a lot of trouble.

The Prince came up followed by Ninni.

He had exchanged his uniform for a plain summer suit, and seemed to be in excellent spirits.

"This is jolly!" he remarked. "No more beastly work for three months!"

"Doesn't your twin brother ever do anything to help?" asked Meg.

"No; he's away with the Navy, lucky beggar! I wish I were, but it always makes me so sea-sick."

Several other people joined them at the tables while they were having tea, and a nigger strolled up with a banjo, and began singing to them. His first song was like this:

UNCLE JEHOSHAPHAT.

Uncle Jehoshaphat sat in his chair;
Pinkety-ponkety-pang!
Uncle Jehoshaphat smiled at the air;
Bumpety-dumpety-bang!
Uncle Jehoshaphat took down his bow,
Tuned up his fiddle, and sang in a low
Ear-splitting voice, like a clamorous crow—
This is the song that he sang:

"Father, dear father, come home to me now!
The dog has jumped over the spoon;
The dish and the fiddle are teasing the cow,
And the cat's run away with the moon."

Uncle Jehoshaphat sang all the day;
Pinkety-ponkety-pung!
Sang in a steadfast, continuous way;
Tankety-tinkety-tung!

Neighbours came in with this earnest request:
"Uncle Jehoshaphat, give us a rest!"
Uncle Jehoshaphat begged to suggest:
"Songs were all made to be sung."

"Father, dear father," etc.

Uncle Jehoshaphat sang all the night;
Pinkety-ponkety-pong!
People declared that he did it from spite;
Tankety-tinkety-tong!
Vainly they thumped him, and sat on his head,
Slapped him and pinched him, and put him to bed;
Uncle Jehoshaphat smiled, and he said:
"*Ain't* it a beautiful song?"

"Father, dear father," etc.

Uncle Jehoshaphat sang for a week;
Pankety-ponkety-ping!
Sang till his voice was reduced to a squeak;
Tunkety-tankety-ting!
Still his old bow on the fiddle he plied
Till the poor neighbours were *too* sorely tried—
That's how dear Uncle Jehoshaphat died.
Never again will he sing:

"Father, dear father," etc.

It was not a very original or striking song, but the singer made a good deal of it. He was wearing a pair of boots that creaked loudly, and when he came to the chorus he managed them so cleverly that they blended with his voice and sounded something like alto and tenor parts.

"Let's have a game," said Meg. "Here's a piano-organ coming. We can play at Musical Chairs, with forfeits."

Nobody liked to refuse her; so very soon the chairs were set out, the piano-organ was brought up, and Meg turned the handle, and gave shrimps to the monkey that sat chattering on the top of the instrument.

When she stopped the first time Professor Phemynin was left without a chair. He picked up a bit of sea-weed, turned it into a guinea-pig by simply rolling it in his hands, and gave it to Meg as his forfeit. The game went on, and one by one the players dropped out, handing something to the little girl as they lost their seats; and at last the man in the



Uncle Jehoshaphat.

white hat was left winner. Then Meg called the forfeits. She had a handkerchief tied over her eyes, of course, but she managed to peep under it just enough to see who was who, and treated them accordingly. She meant to set some of them such difficult and unpleasant tasks that they would refuse to do them, and go away in the sulks. The first person who came up was the photographer. Meg ordered him to go and stand on his head in the sea for two minutes. He obeyed very unwillingly; but he walked a little way into the water, and stood on his head until he grew black in the boots. He was half drowned when he came out, but he stubbornly refused to go away: he just returned to his place, drying his head on his velvet camera-cloth.

The Prince and the nigger were let off easily, but the lanky boy had to stand on

one leg on the top of a bathing-machine while he sang a comic song. The young man with the eye-glass, who looked dreadfully nervous, was ordered to shake hands with the ugliest, bow to the biggest fool, and make a grimace at the person he hated most. The poor fellow was in a dreadful fix, for he was naturally very polite, and did not want to be rude to anybody. However, he got out of it very well by doing all three things to the organ-grinder's monkey, who didn't mind in the least.

The game was finished; but still they all sat there, looking solemn and glum, until Meg grew desperate, and said:

"I wish you would go away, all of you."

"We shall never leave you," they replied in chorus. "We love you."

"Then I shall go away myself."

"We shall follow you wherever you go," they replied.

It was very annoying, and the child did not know what to do; but at last a happy thought struck her.

"Look here," she said, taking from her pocket a piece of newspaper rather clumsily folded, "I can't marry *all* of you, can I? But I'll tell you what I'll do. I will ask you three questions, and the one who answers them all correctly shall be engaged to me. But all the rest must stop bothering at once. Do you agree?"

"We all agree to that," said her admirers.

"And if nobody can answer the questions in ten minutes, you'll all go away—unless I ask any of you to stay?"

They all agreed to this also.

"Very well, then. The first question is: Why does a miller wear a white hat? The second is: What have I in this parcel? And the third is: Where shall I find the Wonderful Co?"

She thought she was certain to get rid of these people now. Perhaps they might answer the first question; but she was quite sure they would never guess that her paper parcel contained only a button which had come off her frock that morning; and as for the Co, she had been told that nobody knew where he was to be found.

Her admirers at once bēgan trying to solve the problems, each in his own way. The nigger lay flat on his back, and strummed on his banjo, with a far-away look in his eyes. The lanky boy buried his head in the sand, like an ostrich, so that his attention might not be distracted; while the photographer, with the same object, hid himself under his camera-cloth. The Prince walked restlessly to and fro; the boatman scratched his head persistently with an oyster shell; Ninni wrote the questions in the sand with a stick, and sat staring at them with his eyes shut; while the other young man kept constantly letting his eye-glass fall and putting it back in its place again. Once he put it into his mouth by mistake, and half swallowed it.

Meg did not notice what the man in the white hat was doing; but in about a minute he came up to her, smiling blandly, with a little book in his hand, and said:

"I can answer your first question, miss."

"Well," said the child, "why does a miller wear a white hat?"

"To keep his head warm," said the man. "Here is the answer in my book, 'The Complete Conundrummer.'"

"I suppose that's all right," said Meg, holding up her parcel. "Now, can you tell me what is in this?"

"Yes, I can. There's nothing in it."

"Wrong! There *is* something in it."

"Would you mind showing it to me?" said the man.

"Not at all," said Meg, undoing the paper. To her surprise, it was empty.



The Photographer Stands on his Head.

"How did you know there was nothing in it?" she asked.

"Because I happened to see something fall out when you held it up just now," he said, chuckling and picking up the button from the sand.

"I don't call that fair," said the child. "You didn't *guess* it. But never mind! I'm sure you can't answer my third question."

"Yes, I can," said the man. "*I* am the Co."

"You?" cried Meg. "It's all very well for you to say so, but how can you prove it?"

"Easily enough. Look here."

He pulled up the coat-sleeve and shirt on his right arm, showing a large "Co" tattooed in blue just above the wrist.

"None genuine without the trade mark," he said, grinning. "Are you all quite satisfied, gentlemen?"

The others, who had crowded round to see what was going on, looked very glum and disappointed, but they had to admit that he was right.

"I don't care," said the child. "I *won't* be engaged to you. You're a nasty, horrid, mean old man!"

"We'll soon see about that," said the Co. "I'll appeal to the King. Come to the palace at once."

"I'm afraid you'll have to go," said the doctor.

So Meg was hurried back to the palace, where his Majesty was in a very sour temper; for he had just taken his first dose of medicine, and didn't like it.

"Well," he growled, "what d'ye want?"

The Co knelt at the throne, and showed the mark on his wrist.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said the King, evidently impressed.

"To the best of my belief, it is, sire," said the Co.

"And what can we do for you?"

The Co explained the case in a few words.

"Blmph!" said his Majesty. "If she's cheeky, she wants shutting up. You had better do so at once, and keep her till she changes her mind."

"I have a grandmother and three maiden aunts at the castle," said the Co, "who will look after her."

"Very good," said the King. "Take her away. Nothing else we can do for you? Good afternoon. Remember us to your maiden aunt and your three grandmothers."

He held out his hand, which the Co shook warmly. Then Meg was taken back to the street, where her other friends were anxiously waiting.

"It's all right," said the Co. "Here, you nigger, just fetch me a cab."

While the nigger went for a cab, the doctor whispered in Meg's ear:

"Don't be alarmed, my child. We'll do all we can to help you. Better go quietly, and perhaps you'll get a chance of slipping away somehow or other."

"In you get!" said the Co, as a four-wheeler drove up.

The child stepped in. She could not, of course, see through the back of the cab, but somehow she felt quite certain that the doctor and the Prince and the nigger and Professor Phemynin were all hanging on behind and riding with her.

After a longish drive they stopped at a small gate in a very high wall. Inside this was a narrow courtyard and a large, gloomy castle, with four very high towers. There was a thick, iron-bound door, and all the lower windows were narrow and heavily barred; so Meg did not see how anybody could ever get her out of the place without the Co's consent. However, she followed him indoors cheerfully enough, and was taken into the drawing-room, where the three maiden aunts were sitting stiffly in three high-backed chairs, doing nothing but looking very grim and unpleasant.

"This," said the Co, "is the young lady I am going to marry in a few years' time. And these, my dear, are my aunts—Tabitha, Prunella, and Grenadine."

Aunt Tabitha looked sourly at the child, and asked her if she could whistle.

"Yes, a little," said Meg, anxious to please.

"I hate children who whistle," said the lady snappishly.

"Can you sing?" asked Miss Prunella.

"No, I'm afraid I can't."

"*All* children ought to be able to sing," remarked Prunella, snorting loudly.

"And can you cook?" inquired Miss Grenadine.

"No," replied the child, trying to say something that would satisfy these stern old ladies, "but I should be very glad to learn."

"*I've* no time to teach you," said Miss Grenadine quite angrily; and they all three snorted.

"Things were very different," said Miss Tabitha, "when *I* was a girl. What *did* they teach you, then?"

"Reading and writing and arithmetic and geography and music," said Meg.

"Didn't they teach you speaking?"

"I learnt to speak before I went to school," said the child.

"Did you, indeed? Let me hear you make a speech."

"Oh, I couldn't do that, I'm sure."

"Then why do you tell us you learnt to speak?"

"I can speak words, miss, not speeches."

"Very well," said Miss Tabitha. "Let me hear you say, 'Black Jack's knapsack's strapped upon his back.' Quick, now!"

Meg dashed at the words in a hurry, and made a terrible hash of them. Just try, and see if you can rattle them off correctly the first time. *She* couldn't; she said: "Black Jack's knacksap's stracked upon his back," and all sorts of queer things; but the more she tried the more muddled she got, till at last she gave it up in despair.

Miss Tabitha turned crossly to her nephew, and said:

"We really can't have this child with us—she can't snort, and she can't sing or play, and she can't even speak. Take her away, please."

"Come along, miss," said the Co, rising and opening the door. "I'll show you your room."

The Co led his visitor up a great many stairs to a nicely-furnished bed-sitting-room at the top of one of the high towers.

"This is your room," said he. "You can go about the house just as you please, but I warn you that you'll never get outside."

The window of the room overlooked the playing-field of a large school, where the antics of a lot of boys, who were behaving in a most extraordinary way, attracted Meg's attention.

"That is the Co-operative School," said the Co, handing her a pair of opera-glasses. "A co-operative school is managed like this: the masters teach the boys what the boys don't know, and the boys teach the masters what the masters don't know, in return. It is play-time now, and the masters are having their lessons."

The boys were evidently enjoying themselves very much, laughing and shouting as they taught their pupils. One of these, a short, fat man, was being exercised in jumping over hurdles, and whenever he failed to get over one, the boys whacked him most heartily with a cricket stump. Another forlorn-looking man was being taught to climb trees; he was very nervous and clumsy, and fell to the ground no end of times, to the great delight of his little friends. The head-master was taking lessons in the use of the common catapult, which he was obliged to aim at the windows of his own house. He looked dreadfully unhappy, as did all the other masters, especially one ill-used individual who was learning to consume six jam tarts, four buns, a packet of butterscotch, and two bottles of ginger-beer at a sitting.

"Now," said the Co, "make yourself at home. We'll send you up some supper presently." And away he went.

Meg was standing by the window when the Co re-entered, followed by a gorgeous footman carrying a tray of supper.

"I've come to have some lunch with you," he announced.

The table was soon laid, and they sat down to the meal. It was served on gold plates and dishes, and all the spoons and forks were gold, too.

"You must be very rich," said the child.

"I am," replied the Co, laughing and rubbing his hands. "Everything I touch turns to gold, as the saying is. That's why I'm called The *Wonderful* Co."

"But why do you always go about in disguise?"

"I have to do it. If I didn't I should have an awful time with the girls who want to marry me for my money. And I

started life without a penny in my pocket."

"So did I," said Meg. "I hadn't even a pocket, I believe."

"Of course you hadn't! What I mean is that when I began to earn my living I had no money and no friends, and only an old broom to sweep a crossing with. I was an orphan—in fact, I am still."

"And how did you make your fortune?"

"I was just going to tell you. One day I picked up a purse full of money that somebody had dropped in the road."

"And you took it to the owner," suggested Meg, "and he was so pleased with your honesty that he adopted you and set you up in business?"

"Not quite," replied the Co, shaking with laughter. "That's what little boys in moral story-books do. I didn't. I kept the money and started an ice-cream barrow. For nine months I lived on the ice-cream I couldn't sell—it was cheaper than buying other things, and I found it very nourishing. I kept on saving, and did so well that at last I bought a winkle stall. Then I lived on winkles for a year, and bought a sausage shop, and ate nothing but sausages for eighteen months. Then I took a boot shop."

"And did you live on boots?"

"No, young lady, I did not. Well, when I had made enough money I bought a patent invention that made my fortune."

"Was it a pill?"

"No, it was a collapsible tent. You had one in your garden, and when a stupid, prosy old person came to see you you got him to sit in the tent. Then you went outside and pulled a string, and the whole thing collapsed on the party's head and got rid of him in no time. I sold thousands and thousands."

"I suppose it is very nice to be rich?" said the child.

"Rather! I can do just what I like. Even the King is under my thumb, and it's a very good thing he *has* someone to look after him, or he'd get into no end of trouble with his horrid temper. That reminds me. Do you happen to know a respectable man who wants a situation as public executioner?"

"I'm afraid I don't."

"Well, we want one. Ours never stay long. The fact is, the King is always ordering people to be beheaded, and I have to interfere, because killing off too many people is bad for trade, you know. And then, of course, these poor fellows grumble at losing the job, and give notice almost as soon as we engage them. It was a pity we had to part with Wotto; he was a lovely executioner, but he was rather absent-minded. He kept a barber's shop in his spare time, and one day he forgot himself, and cut a customer's head off instead of his hair. The papers made rather a fuss about it, and we had to discharge poor Wotto with a pension. Accidents *will* happen, you know. I must go and see about a new man at once, if you'll excuse me."

The Co hastily finished his glass of wine, and hurried away.

Meg got tired of her own company after a time and went for a tour of inspection round the castle. She wandered about just as the fancy took her, and looked into two or three of the big rooms without meeting anyone; but as she put her head in at one particular door she saw an old lady sitting in an arm-chair nearly asleep. The child was going quietly away without disturbing her, when the old lady suddenly woke, looked up, and said, in a high, thin, cracked voice:

"Come in, come in. Come and see the old woman."

So Meg went in. The lady was very withered and wrinkled indeed, but she seemed quite cheerful and active, and begged her visitor to take a chair.

"I'm the Co's grandmother," she said,

"and my name is Mother Bunch. There were some beautiful verses written about me the other day—I don't know if you have heard them? They begin like this:

There was an old woman, and what do you think?
She lived upon nothing but victuals and drink!

I forget the rest. My memory is so bad. In fact, I'm not quite 'all there.' Perhaps you have noticed it?"

"Not at all," said the child politely, and, indeed, she had not seen anything unusual; but even as she spoke something curious happened. Mother Bunch's nose suddenly disappeared, so that her spectacles fell off into her lap.

"There goes my poor nose!" she said. "It's a little awkward, you see, until you get used to it. I never know what is going to be missing next, and it keeps on changing about so fast that it used to make me giddy just at first."

"It *must* be very annoying," said Meg. "What do you do when your feet are not there?"

"Nothing, unless I happen to be walking; then I tumble down. Dear me! There's one of them gone now!"

Meg looked at the footstool, and saw only one shoe where there had been two a moment before, and noticed at the same time that the old lady's nose had returned to its place.

Meg did not know what to do; but she thought she had better leave the old lady to recover her pieces. She wandered about, however, upstairs and down, and she had quite lost her way, and could no more find the sitting-room than she could fly. She got so lost, indeed, that at last she opened a door and found herself back again in her own room.

She saw a small group of people standing outside the castle wall, apparently making signals to her. With the glasses she was just able to recognise the doctor and her other friends, including the kite. While she watched them, waving her handkerchief to attract their attention, the kite rose in the air, and began flying towards her, growing bigger and bigger as he came, till his tail tapped against the window-pane.

"Hullo, Lazybones!" he said. "I've been sent to fetch you. There's a lozenge somewhere about me. You are to eat it, and then hang on to my tail, and I'll have you out of this in no time."

Meg swallowed the lozenge, which she found in a piece of paper pinned to the kite's tail. Then she stood on the window-sill, tied the end of the tail round her waist, and let the kite gently lift her till she was floating high up in the air outside the castle. The others pulled in the string, and before very long she was safely landed on the other side of the wall.

The Prince threw her a bouquet as she touched the ground, while Ninni clapped his hands and shouted "Encore!" at the top of his voice.

"Now, my child," said the doctor, "we are very sorry indeed to lose you, but the best thing you can do is to start off home as soon as possible before the Co finds out that you have escaped. This way, please. We shall have to look sharp if we want to catch the boat."

They hurried her off to the quay; but when they arrived they were only just in time to see the boat steaming out of the harbour.

"Bless me!" said the doctor. "This is very unfortunate."

"Never mind," said Professor Phemynin. "We must manage to send her home some other way."

"I'll take you," said the kite.

"No, thanks, I won't trust *you* again," said Meg.

"Just as you please," said the kite. "But if you won't come with me I'll be off by myself. Good evening, gentlemen."



"There goes my poor nose!" she said.

He jumped into the air, and very soon disappeared.

"Can you do anything for me, Professor?" asked the child.

"Certainly," said the conjurer. "I was only wondering which would be the best way to do it. Yes, on the whole, I think I'd better bring your house here, put you inside, and then send the whole lot back together."

"*Can* you?" asked Meg.

"Oh, yes, it's quite simple. I'll see about it at once."

He took his wand from his pocket and waved it in the air, muttering some mysterious spells at the same time. In a few minutes something like a small cloud appeared far out at sea, which, as it rapidly approached, turned out to be Meg's home, looking as if it had been cut off from the ground like the top of a carrot. The conjurer said a few more words, and it settled quietly down on the ground in front of him. The house was shut up for the night; all the blinds were drawn down, the lamps were lighted, and Meg heard her sister Nellie practising the violin in the drawing-room.

"I hope there is nothing wrong," said the doctor. "Someone inside seems to be in pain."

"It's only my sister playing the fiddle," said Meg; "I don't think it hurts her *much*."

"I'm very glad to hear it," said the doctor. "She must have a wonderfully strong constitution."

"Now," said Professor Phemynin, "will any gentleman kindly examine the house, to see that there is no deception?"

"We have no time for that," said the doctor. "If you are ready, my dear, we will start you off at once."

"I am quite ready," replied the child.

"Good-bye, then, my little friend," said the doctor, looking quite distressed. "I am very sorry to lose you."

"Good-bye," said Meg, "and thank you so much for all your kindness. I shall never forget my visit here."

Then all her friends shook hands with her. Ninni positively blubbered, while the Prince, who looked dreadfully melancholy, begged her to come back again before long.

When the leave-taking was over, the conjurer produced a ladder from his hat, set it against the house, and mounted with Meg to the roof.

"Now, my dear," he said, "I shall just pass you in through the slates, so as not to disturb the family. I shan't hurt you."

He struck a wax match and held it under Meg's nose. She at once began to feel very drowsy, and the last thing she remembered before falling asleep altogether was sinking slowly through the roof just as if it had been a big pat of soft butter.

She awoke to find herself in her chair in front of the nursery fire. It was quite dark out of doors, but when she looked out of the window she saw the postman's lantern coming in at the gate, and heard the bell and the click of the letter-box, so she knew the house had come home safely. The kite was back on his nail, too, without the ghost of an arm or a leg, though he still seemed to be grinning in the flicker. of the fire. Then she began wondering whether she had really been away, after all, or had only been dreaming. She knew the answer to Tom's riddle, and surely she couldn't have guessed that in her sleep? On the whole, she didn't know what to think, so, when Tom came in and called her a lazy young beggar, she said nothing about her trip. But she quite expects the kite to wake up again some day, and take her for another flight to some strange country; and if he does she won't really care much whether it is a dream or not.

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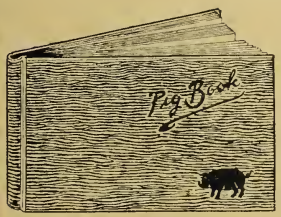
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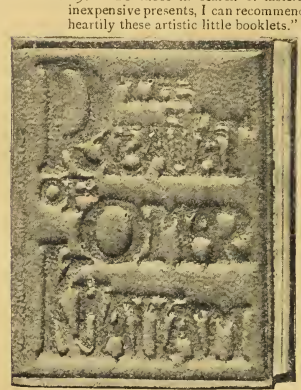
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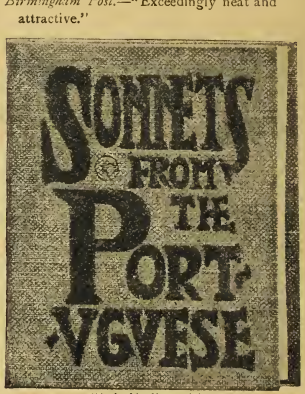
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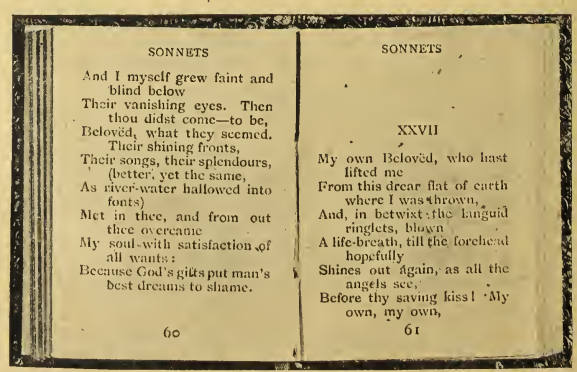
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As river-water hallowed into fonts)
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
My soul with satisfaction of all wants:
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

60

SONNETS

XXVII

My own Beloved, who hast lifted me
From this drear flat of earth where I was thrown,
And, in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown
A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully
Shines out again, as all the angels see,
Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,

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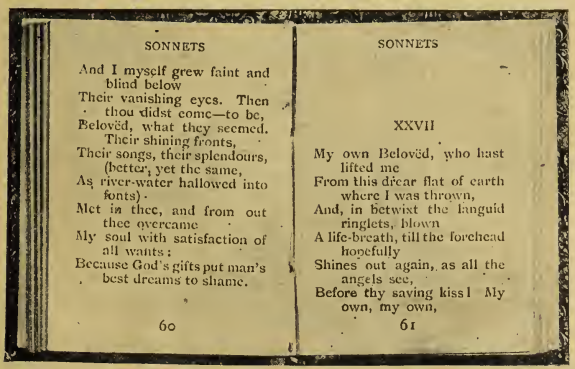
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